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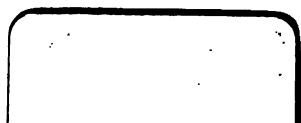
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AS
INNOCENT AS A BABY



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AS INNOCENT AS A BABY.

A Novel.

" . . . As we jog on, either laugh with me, or at me, or, in short, do anything,—only keep your temper."

TRISTRAM SHANDY

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY AND SON,
1874.

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AS INNOCENT AS A BABY.

CHAPTER I.

MR. ANDREWS FALLS INTO A PASSION.

WHETHER Mrs. Lovel really deserves our pity or not is not for me to say. It is not the prompter's part to pop his head out of his box and bid the dress circle weep over the elegant Mirabel's disappointment, or call to the pit to laugh over honest Trot's bucolic love-making. But the prompter may have his private opinions as well as my lord in



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But for Mr. Andrews! for the real sufferer! for that afflicted loving man who, Sunday after Sunday, presented a more haggard face, and turned upon Mrs. Lovel's pew a more ghastly eye than the churchwardens had observed in him the Sabbath before!—could we empty the beds of the sea, Peter, and rain new and saltier oceans with our eyes, such a testimony of our real compassion would still but imperfectly represent the profound and ardent sympathy with which we view your distress.

It was Mr. Lockfield who was the first to tell him that Jessie had affirmed herself engaged to Robert Grahame.

This hateful disclosure was made in Mr. Andrews's own house, in Mr. Andrews's own library, from the depths of Mr. Andrews's own arm-chair, in which Mr. Lockfield sate, with somewhat of a curled aspect,

as if he were bending to the storm that, in anticipation, whirled furious over his head.

The young man at first refused to believe what his reverend friend declared, and scowled so ferociously as he bade the little gentleman repeat that observation, that Mr. Lockfield's voice died out ere his sentence was finished.

A tremendous scene followed.

Not very many disagreeable words escaped Mr. Andrews ; his passion was too deep for oaths. But—*how* he abused his cousin ! how he hooted and pelted and hissed him ! Sir, the execution of the Mannings was child's play to it. Indeed, had Mr. Grahame committed twenty murders, and buried twenty corpses under twenty hearthstones, Mr. Andrews could not have exhibited more rage and bitterness and hate. In vain Mr. Lockfield held up first one hand,

and then another hand, and then both hands. He might as well have tried to stop a runaway dray-horse by catching at its tail.

Hadn't Mr. Andrews a suspicion all along that Grahame was up to some abominable mischief, by hanging about Sandhaven after he had been kicked out of Springfield House? He remembered mentioning that suspicion to Mr. Lockfield, and Mr. Lockfield had sneered at him.

Don't tell him.

Not sneered? Why, he saw the sneer with his own eyes, and had a mind just to tell Mr. Lockfield, very quietly, that if sneering was his game, he had better go and play at it in some other parish.

Of course he never met them together. Wasn't it Mr. Lockfield's advice to him not to intrude himself upon Miss Marchmont, to take care to meet her only at her aunt's,

not to follow or detain her in the street, for fear that she should grow disgusted ?

If Mr. Lockfield hadn't given this advice, who had, he wanted to know ?

He saw through Mr. Lockfield and Mrs. Lovel's game. Their object was to make a fool of him.

What did Mr. Lockfield mean by interrupting ? That was his house, and he should say what he liked in it.

He thought Mr. Lockfield his friend. A pretty friend ! From the moment of his introduction to Mrs. Lovel he had met with nothing but humiliation and degradation, and been made to feel like a worm. But if he was a worm, he would turn, as he'd let them all see. A worm, indeed, worth two thousand a year !

Of course Miss Marchmont would hate a man who was made to look like a worm ; and

who had made a worm of him but Mr. Lockfield? the man his father had obliged, the very last man in the world certainly whom he thought would have ill-treated him.

Only the other day Mr. Lockfield told him that his gentlemanly behaviour to Miss Marchmont was charming her. And now Mr. Lockfield comes to tell him that Miss Marchmont is engaged to be married to his cousin! If he knew his cousin wasn't a coward and wouldn't refuse to fight, he'd call him out and shoot him.

Mrs. Lovel would be glad to see him married to her niece?

What was the use of saying that? He hated Mrs. Lovel. He would chuck her into the sea if he could. It was she who made him ridiculous before Miss Marchmont, bullied him for declaring his love, and now she pretended she was sorry!

Who was Mrs. Lovel, that she should turn up her nose at a gentleman ? A lady ! Why Sarah Mews, his laundress, knew how to behave herself better. To think that Mr. Lockfield should have gone on humbugging him by saying that when once Mrs. Lovel liked him she would stick to him, and that a better-hearted woman never lived ! Mrs. Lovel might understand this, that if ever he *did* marry Miss Marchmont, she (Mrs. L.) should never enter his house, or sit at his table like a scarecrow, to frighten away the first-rate society he kept.

Oh—Mr. Lockfield could go. Mr. Lockfield needn't stay. But before he went, Mr. Andrews would tell him, that so long as he lived he should never forget the double-dealing part he had played in this affair.

Mr. Lockfield left, looking as if he had

just escaped from a drunken crowd in front of a house on fire. What could he have said? How could he have preserved his dignity? What dignity can a man preserve who is only five feet high? Should he resign his living? What good would that do? Whoever got it—and Mahony seemed a likely man—would still have Mr. Andrews for a patron; and if Mahony could stand Mr. Andrews as a patron, why couldn't Mr. Lockfield? If he gave up his living, where should he find another? Where's the fun in cutting off your nose to please your face? What purpose is answered by flinging away in a rage the loaf that will give you a meal? If he had five hundred a year of his own—if he had an influential friend in the House of Commons—if he knew the prime minister—if the Archbishop of Canterbury had no relations

—if he could save some nobleman's life—why, then, what so easy as to fling defiance at young Mr. Andrews, call him a name or two, indulge in a withering sarcasm, preach a farewell sermon, receive his testimonial, and make a dignified exit.

Dignity, forsooth! ay, dignity and money; dignity and friends; dignity and a good house; dignity and a remunerative profession. If this were Palestine, a land abounding in caves, herbs, and water, where there were no game laws, no magistrates, no policemen, where a man might take lodgings upon the cold ground, and no landlady poison his breakfast with a bill, no landlord impeach him as a vagabond, then might we talk of dignity, resent impertinence, pack our portmanteau, and withdraw to the nearest cavern left replete with every convenience, including a

skull in good preservation, by the last Nazarene, Ebonite, or Gnostic that made his bed there; but to be dignified and poor—to be dignified and owe your tailor money—to be dignified and stopped by a bailiff—to be dignified and cross-examined by Mr. Registrar Shallow——

Come, Lazarus, crawl from under that table, leave your crumbs for a moment, and help me to convince Dives yonder, wisely sermonizing us over a dish of ortolans, that dignity is money, and without it impudence, assumption, and conceit. This furrow of care upon our Shakesperean brow has not been dug out by thought for nothing.

Well, you can guess how this dreadful quarrel ended. Next morning came Mr. Andrews to the Rectory looking sleepless, haggard, and contrite, all his wrath spent,

his neckcloth awry, his mood tearful. He begged Mr. Lockfield's pardon for his intemperate language. He asked Mr. Lockfield, as his father's old friend and a gentleman deservedly celebrated for the liberality and justice of his views, if a very great deal was not to be forgiven to a man so ill-used, so humiliated, so disappointed, so much in love as he had been. He spoke of Miss Marchmont and burst into tears, an illustration of his grief, which entirely quenched the few sparks of indignation that lived among the embers of Mr. Lockfield's memory, and obliged him to shake hands.

Will the candid reader deny that Mr. Lockfield showed real judgment in preferring to lose his dignity for a few hours to his living for ever ?

The two gentlemen indulged in a long

conversation which need not be repeated here, since Mr. Lockfield could find very little more to say to Mr. Andrews by way of encouragement than what he had said to Mrs. Lovel.

And yet intrinsically feeble and doubtful as his views were respecting Mr. Grahame's stability of mind, he somehow contrived to cheer Mr. Andrews up with them.

"Birds will sing in winter, and love will hope alway,"

is the exclamation of a young lady (christened Arabella, sand-coloured hair, head on one side in portrait, neck exposed through a triangular slit) in a very beautiful and neatly-written valentine she sent to a young gentleman a February or two ago: apply the Shandean truth involved in this powerful exclamation to the subject under con-

sideration, and you'll get at the whole secret of the success that attended Mr. Lockfield's benevolent attempt to inspire young Mr. Andrews. To you and me nothing, perhaps, could well sound more fallacious than the arguments Mr. Lockfield declaimed, standing on the hearth-rug, both hands working very eloquently. But look, Mr. Puff, yonder stalks Romeo swathed in a cloak, his hat drawn over his scowling brows, his eyes fixed gloomily upon the ground. He is madly in love with Juliet, but Mr. Mercutio has just told him that Juliet has promised Mr. Benvolio to marry him. Passion and darts! Clouds, roll your thunders, and dart your lightnings, ye heavens! Come quickly, some earthquake, and split open for Romeo this solid ball of earth! Do you think him inconsolable? Cap in hand, let us approach him.

AS INNOCENT AS A BABY.

“Mr. Romeo, it is perfectly true that Mr. Benvolio is a beast, and has won Miss Juliet by the meanest and most insidious arts. But Miss Juliet is a very simple-minded, innocent young lady, whose head had been turned by the senseless flattery Mr. Benvolio flirted in her ears. Heads may be turned without hearts being touched, we hope. Benvolio, the beast, is off in a week or two to fight the Saracens. It is not improbable but that he may neglect to avail himself of the convenience of the overland mail, and Juliet, expecting a letter, gets none. Or, suppose Benvolio *does* write, isn't Juliet a woman? Mayn't she change her mind? Mayn't separation induce forgetfulness? Friar Laurence and her old nurse have both promised to use their utmost endeavours to induce Juliet to consider Benvolio a crack-brained sort of

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chap, who makes loves wherever he goes, and who, should there be no ladies in the Holy Land, will make love to an Ebrew Jew with a great beard and a hawk's nose, rather than let his hand get out for want of practice."

Thus, cap in hand, do we discourse to Romeo with our judgment sneering at our arguments, but our conscience approving our aims. What wonder if before long Romeo finds his tongue, smoothes his brow, begins to doubt, reasons, ponders, pauses, starts, stares, smiles, extends his hand, protests that there is real truth in what we say, and finally insists upon standing a bottle?

The long and short of Mr. Lockfield's advice to Mr. Andrews was to wait.

That had been his advice to Mrs. Lovel, and as, after an infinity of pondering, Mrs.

Lovel couldn't see what else she could do, she determined to wait.

Jessie had made up her mind to be hideously threatened and ceaselessly tormented by her aunt after that row in the parlour, but she had also made up her mind to meet Mr. Grahame and love him and regard herself as his betrothed, let her aunt storm as she would. But judge her astonishment when, on returning to the parlour in full expectation of being met with a crackling volley as soon as she showed her face, her aunt made no observation whatever, but sate in stiff silence until dinner was ready, when she began to talk of the weather, and hoped that summer had now begun in earnest.

All that afternoon, all that evening, not a word about Mr. Grahame, not a word about returning the ring and break-

ing off the engagement. Next day came, and Jessie, trembling but determined, dressed herself for "a walk." She was to meet him on the sands at eleven. If her aunt asked her where she was going, she would say; but her aunt did not ask her; and almost as uncomfortable in her mind as if Mrs. Lovel had devoted a long hour to the steadiest abuse, she went to keep her appointment.

Of course she found Grahame where he had promised to meet her, and I assure you as affecting and touching an interview took place between them as ever sentimental novelist imagined. Jessie, supported by his arm and hidden from vulgar observation by the great cliffs, cooed her story to him, told him everything her aunt had said, everything Mr. Lockfield had said, and expressed her astonishment at the silence

and calm that had followed the storm of the preceding day.

"I know," she warbled, "that they will make me suffer a great deal because of my love and promises, and try to wean me away from you; but oh, they never shall, and I don't care what I endure for your sake, dearest, so long as I feel that you will always be true to me, and write regularly, and never, never care for anybody else."

And what did he say to this pretty speech?

My *dear* sir, *do* you think you are the only man who ever made love? that nobody else ever gasped out such thrilling, wild, incredible promises as you perpetrated that evening when she said, "And oh, James, will you always, *always* love me?" I warrant you Grahame returned as delightful an

answer as Jessie could wish to hear, and with that I'll roll up a great lump of chalk before the lovers and hide them ; for not even to gratify my enemies and illustrate my profound knowledge of the female heart will I swell by one phrase more than can be helped the current stock of love-literature, with its blushes and spasms and bad grammar, its familiar references and astounding epithets—that literature which, from the period when Lord Orville made love to Miss Anville, has been broadening and deepening into an ocean in which hundreds of critics float or drown amid the wildest screams for help.

When we consider the provocation under which Mrs. Lovel laboured, great praise is due to her for the masterly manner in which she carried out her reverend friend's advice to wait, to be patient, and ask no questions.

Having no nervous system to speak of, she of course found her part harder to play than had she been gifted with a wooden face and a frame filled with steel-fibres; but what most helped to keep her quiet was her intense fear that, if she said one word too much to Jessie the girl would elope. Elopements, she thought, might, like scrofula, madness, turn-up noses, and many other diseases, run in families; and, since Lavinia had made a runaway match, nothing was more probable than that Jessie might commit the same enormity.

Just think of the gossip, whispers, shrugs, sneers, impertinent sympathy, and heart-felt delight that would be excited among the people of Sandhaven by the niece of the well-known, the charitable, the eminently-pious Mrs. Lovel eloping! Here, Mr. Landlord, here's your rent; Mr.

Auctioneer, step this way, if you please, make out the catalogue and sell off; Mr. Postmaster, burn all letters addressed to Mrs. Lovel, and to all inquiries reply that she has fled anywhere, anywhere out of the world.

Poor woman ! imagine her niece eloping ! I protest when she pondered this probability the blood froze in her veins, and her old heart thumped inside her lean bosom as if it meant to beat its way out of her. Wasn't here a dread, potent enough to bind her tongue to the roof of her mouth ? Jessie wondered and wondered that her aunt asked no questions, let her do as she liked, talked of anything, of everything but the one thing which she had made up her mind to find her aunt never weary of talking about. Mrs. Lovel's extraordinary reserve made her uneasy and restless, but

not half so restless and uneasy as she would have been had not her little heart been quietly weeping day and night over the separation that was to happen in a short time.

Ay, that was her trouble now ; and surely if Mrs. Lovel had known what real grief weighed down the child's innocent soul, how empty life was becoming, how all the glory was departing from the sunshine, how far better death sometimes seemed to her than separation and life, the old lady would have taken her in her arms and grieved with her, and softened her anguish by giving her consent to her love.

Their engagement was of the ordinary stealthy kind, contrived by the ordinary sentiments, begotten by the ordinary considerations. He could not marry her yet because he doubted whether he could sup-

port her on his pay, and his pay was all he had. He was not on good terms with his mother, and so if he married her and took her out to India, he should not know whom to consign her to, should it happen, as was very probable, that he would be shifted from place to place, and he never could subject her to the rough, sordid, inconvenient life that an officer in charge of a detachment of black men whom he had to march through the jungle from one spot to another, led in India. They must wait for a year or two ; he was sure of promotion, and when it came, he would return and marry her.

Here you have briefly his reasons for not marrying and taking her out with him ; and let Mr. Puff despise the plainness and boldness of this statement as heartily as he chooses, he knows very well that, sub-

stantially, nothing whatever could be added to it by an enumeration of the kisses, sighs, looks, taking of hands, vows, endearments, and tears, that accompanied the conversation in which these things were discussed.

Perhaps it was because they saw no prospect of marrying just then that in all the reasons they gave each other for not doing so, no mention was made of Mrs. Lovel's objection. However, Mrs. Lovel's objection was altogether so groundless, frivolous, and unfair to Mr. Grahame, whom she hardly knew, that we may easily conceive the lovers had not patience enough to speak about her. One thing was as certain as anything in this life can be : Jessie was so deeply in love with Grahame, that, had he asked her to marry him before he left, she would have done so whether her aunt liked it or not ; whence, you will

infer, that the old lady's fears were tolerably accurate, and that Mr. Lockfield had exhibited superhuman sagacity in bidding her let the lovers have their own way.

CHAPTER II.

JESSIE'S GRIEF.

IT came at last, that dreadful day of separation. It came—the hours passed—and took Graham with them.

Lockfield had the news, two hours after the young fellow's departure, from the confectioner. Looking up, he had beheld in the drawing-room window "lodgings to let," had stepped in, and heard from Mr. Pyman's own lips that the gentleman was gone.

“Lodgings to let.” There’s a prosaic, Monday-morning-like, stony, and odious element in the farewell of a man whose departure had strained a sweet girl’s heart-strings, and whose own heart bled as the stage-coach bore him away from the little sea-side town that love had consecrated in his memory for all time! “Lodgings to let!” Great heaven! has humanity ever a sorrow or joy into which life does not thrust some cruel impertinence, some gross detail to damp and shock the emotion? Is it a mother weeping over the corpse of her little one—hark to the muffin-man at the area next door ringing his cursed bell and exchanging jokes with the blowsy cook. Is it a meeting after long and weary years of separation—bong! the boiler bursts in the kitchen, and husband and wife, or

lover and sweetheart, or sister and brother, have to unclasp each other, and listen while Mrs. Dripping howls over her scalded arm, and uses fearful language to the scullery-maid.

But long before Mr. Lockfield could carry the news to Mrs. Lovel, the old lady knew all about it.

Sitting at her window, she had seen Jessie come hurriedly through the garden. The child's pale face and red eyes told the story more fully than had twenty neighbours, headed by Mr. Lockfield, poured into the parlour and deafened Mrs. Lovel with their gratulatory gossip. Jessie passed through the hall, and went upstairs. Jane came into the room and told Mrs. Lovel she was sure something was wrong with Miss Marchmont, for she *did* look queer. The old lady went into the

hall and listened, but only heard Jessie turn the key in her bedroom door.

It was then half-past eleven o'clock. Jessie had been out since half-past nine. Mrs. Lovel went back to her chair and took up her knitting, but soon laid it down again. What ailed the needles that they would not hook the cotton? She sank into a reverie which lasted a quarter of an hour, went to the door, listened again, again came back to her chair, took up her knitting, and in a very few minutes tossed it aside.

Twelve o'clock struck. Jessie still kept her bedroom. Mrs. Lovel grew very anxious.

Whenever Mrs. Lovel grew very anxious, unpleasant stories recurred to her. Who had told them, or where she had read them, she never could remember; but the

stories always came out of her mind as fresh as if they were entirely new, and with such vexatious aptness as commonly made her alarm very keen.

The story that now recurred to her was this : There was a young lady deeply devoted to a man. There were many obstacles in the way of their marriage ; still they loved on with hearts never changing and brows never cold. But at last somebody interfered so effectually, that the young man wrote to the young lady and told her that, owing to circumstances over which he had no control, he was reluctantly compelled to break off the engagement with her. Had the young lady been a cotemporary of ours, there was one of three things she could have done :

She could have broken her heart. Or

She could have married somebody else.
Or

She could have sued for damages.

But in those days steam hadn't been discovered, and the law—probably considering that sentiment was a thing that could very well take care of itself—refused to interfere. Hence the heroine of Mrs. Lovel's story had only two alternatives to choose between : Instead of marrying a better man, she very foolishly broke her heart. The mother, entering her daughter's bedroom an hour or two after the fatal missive had been delivered, found the girl stretched upon the floor dead.

Suppose anything dreadful should happen to Jessie !

Mrs. Lovel entered the hall for the third time with a beating heart, and with the laborious agility of an agitated old woman,

clambered up the stairs. She knocked at Jessie's door. No answer. The old lady listened, feeling very faint, and wondering—if anything *had* happened—whether she should have scream enough in her voice to make Jane hear.

She knocked again : this time not fruitlessly : the handle was turned, and Jessie presented herself.

The girl was very pale, her eyes very red ; she had taken off her hat, and her hair hung neglected over her forehead ; her pouting under-lip gave a baby-like expression to her face ; but Mrs. Lovel might have seen that there was something deeper and sadder than a baby's grief in the look it wore.

When she saw her aunt, her head dropped, and she went to the window without speaking.

"I was wondering what had become of you, Jessie," said Mrs. Lovel, more affected by the frightened but unutterably sad look Jessie had given her than she chose to admit to herself.

"Auntie, I hope you haven't come to speak crossly to me. I am so wretched—so wretched," wailed the girl, keeping her face hidden from the old lady.

"What makes you think me so hard-hearted? Never, never before was I thought cruel!" cried Mrs. Lovel. "What sins have we committed that we should be afflicted with this dread of one another—we who live in one house and have the same blood in our veins? Since you told me that Mr. Grahame has engaged you to be his wife, we have scarcely spoken to one another, and day after day have you stolen forth and left me sitting alone with

a beating heart, and filled with the most dreadful apprehensions, so that I feel as if my life must soon come to an end, for no human being knows what my fears have made me go through day and night."

"He has gone, auntie, gone to India—and I may never see him again," said Jessie, gulping down the sobs that rose in rapid succession. "And what memories will he take away with him of the girl whom he knows loves him so truly, having to meet him as if he were a guilty creature—as if we were both wicked in God's sight for loving one another? He was driven from Springfield House—yes, auntie, he was—and cruel stories were told of him, and once only he came to see us here, and then you were not kind to him. And oh, auntie, what wrong has he done

but to love me? Mr. Andrews wanted me to marry him, and was *he* wicked for having that wish? If I hadn't known your prejudice I would have asked him to forgive the reception you gave him, and call again and make himself known to you. Oh, auntie, it is not only because he has gone away from me—never perhaps to see me again—though God will not part us, I am sure—it isn't only for this that I feel as if my heart would break, but because you, whom I love as if you were my own mother, are estranged from me, and think me wicked for having deceived you—though I *never* should have done so had you not disliked Mr. Grahame for no reason at all, and ordered me to cut him."

"It has been a miserable thing from beginning to end," half blubbered the old

lady, her eyes quite humid, and ready to shower down tears out of sympathy with the piteous grief expressed in Jessie's language and face. "Why couldn't both those young men have left you alone? I didn't bring you over from France for *them*. I wanted you to be my child; but these young men have come between us and made me distrustful of you, and filled you with deceit, so that, I say, my house is no longer a home, but a dwelling turned upside down, and I wander about it with as vacant a mind as any idiot could carry in an asylum. I went to give Jane some orders about dinner this morning, and reached the kitchen without knowing I was there, and found myself staring at her without speaking, thinking as I was of other things. It was no wonder she turned pale and thought I had run

mad. And I do say, that if this thing had gone on much longer, it would have driven me mad, for I'm an old woman, my nerves were never strong, and it takes little to unseat the reason in a person of my years."

"Why wouldn't you let me meet him here?—all this would have been saved," sobbed Jessie, running up to Mrs. Lovel, laying her hand on her arm, and up-turning as love-stricken a face as ever Bowles or Sidney could have sonneteered.

"There was no understanding between us, and I didn't want any," answered the old lady; "I dared not speak a word for fear of driving you into some rash and dreadful act. Never, never did I think you would meet him in secret and become engaged by stealth. But there, there!" she cried, in the soothing tones of a mother

patting a squalling child, "wipe your eyes, our troubles are over for the present; we won't think of the past more than we can help; you are suffering enough, and no word of mine shall aggravate your grief."

"Do you think he will ever come back, auntie? Isn't India a fearful country, full of cholera and animals?" asked Jessie, her voice and lips quivering in unison with her heart.

"We are all in God's hands," responded Mrs. Lovel, who hadn't the heart to remonstrate, and was thus insensibly led on into sympathizing with the grief which she believed it her duty to deprecate. "He has been in India before. It isn't as if he were a stranger to that country."

"There is a mail every month, and he has promised to write to me regularly,"

said Jessie, forcing a wan smile through her tears.

Mrs. Lovel was very nearly shaking her head and looking severe ; but catching sight of the pathetic smile, she answered—

“ If he writes to you, I hope his letters will be such as a young lady ought to receive from a gentleman.”

“ What makes you doubt him ?” cried Jessie. “ He is the truest gentleman—most high-minded and honourable. He is so noble in little things—never said one angry word against his cousin, although I told him the wicked hints Mr. Andrews had dropped against him. He had always a kind word for you too, though he felt himself wronged by your prejudice, and would often speak of your goodness to the poor, and the praise people gave you when he mentioned your name to them. Would

Mr. Andrews have acted like this, or any man who wasn't a gentleman? You never cared to speak to me about him, and I never had the courage to mention his name for fear of making you angry; but how often I wanted to ask you why you disliked him, what he had done to vex you, and whether our religion allows us to hate people we scarcely know, merely because they are spoken against by others who are interested in defaming them!"

"Don't talk to me of religion! So much bad passion has been excited since Mr. Lockfield introduced us to Mr. Andrews, that we have all need to fall upon our knees and implore God's forgiveness," answered Mrs. Lovel, with great emotion. "It was not what other people said of Mr. Grahame, but what I myself saw, that prejudiced me. I thought him acting

anything but a gentlemanly part in getting you to meet him alone——”

“You disliked him before you knew I met him, and he has gone away, and I may never see him again!”

And in an agony of grief, Jessie flung herself against the bed, buried her face, and wept lamentably, emitting long, doleful, wailing cries, that struck into the old lady's breast like daggers, and made her wring her hands with dismay and concern.

“Don't, Jessie, don't, please don't cry like that! it is dreadful to hear you!” she implored, trying feebly to raise the girl's face off the bed, into which it was pressed. “Oh, whatever shall I do? Jessie, Jessie, don't cry like that! He'll come back some of these days—he's sure to write to you. Oh, how dreadfully she cries! You'll

break your heart if you go on like that. Come downstairs—I'll send for Mr. Lockfield—I can't bear this—Jessie, can't you be more brave?"

And had she thought she could have done any good by saying such things, she would have told Jessie that not only would she sanction her love, but write to Mr. Grahame herself, and be present at their wedding, and furnish their house, and be a godmother—in short, do every possible thing that could be done, so acutely did Jessie's wailing make her suffer.

However, before long the wailing stopped of its own accord, and Jessie exhibited a face swollen with grief, matted with gold-coloured hair.

"I feel very ill," she whispered, in a voice choked by long tremulous sighs. "Let me lie down, auntie, and be alone

a little,—I—I shall get over this by-and-by—but I can't talk now."

"Yes, lie down, it'll do you good," said poor Mrs. Lovel, fingering the pillow nervously, and hitting it some tremulous thumps to make it comfortable. "And don't cry, for that won't make any of us the happier. The noise you utter goes through my body like a naked sword. Get on the bed, and I'll take off your boots. That dressing-gown over you will keep you warm, and I'll send Jane up to you with a glass of wine."

"No, no—it would choke me. Don't let Jane come near me. Don't let anybody see me."

"Well, there, there, there! Lie down—that's right—I'll pull the curtains to. Try and get a little sleep. Nobody shall come to you but me. And, oh, don't cry

any more. Everything will come right. God is very good, even to the wretchedest sinner, and will not forget us. We will pray for each other, Jessie dear—and you may pray for *him* too, if you like, since you love him so, and I'll not be angry. There, there, there !”

And then she drew the bed-curtains, and stepped on tiptoe to the door, paused, listened, went out, listened on the landing, descended the stairs, listened in the hall, and—

Rap, rap, rap, bang, tap, bang ! shrieked the knocker.

Ah, heaven, what agony to poor Mrs. Lovel's nerves, strained as they were to such an exquisite tension, that a mouse's scratching had thrilled along them with thunderous effect.

Who is it, Jane ? who but Mr. Lock-

field? He ran into the parlour, throwing open the door so as to fetch Mrs. Lovel a smart rap on the elbow, made no apology, but turning a face to her, rosy with excitement, cried—

“He is gone! Pyman’s lodgings are to let. The danger is passed, and now we may all breathe freely.”

“Breathe freely!” echoed Mrs. Lovel, aggrieved by Mr. Lockfield’s happy countenance; “you may breathe freely, and Mr. Andrews may be giddy with joy. But speaking for myself, I never felt more miserable in my life.”

“What!” cried the astonished clergyman. “I thought the news would delight you!”

“It is killing my niece,” gasped the old lady. “She was crying just this minute so deplorably, that had she expired, I

shouldn't have been surprised. Don't you believe me, Mr. Lockfield, that you continue looking so happy?"

"I can't help my face, Mrs. Lovel; and it certainly is not my fault if I look happy, for did my features but reflect my emotion, you would witness but little merriment. Why, I have run here as fast as my legs could carry me to be the first to bring you news I made sure would overpower you with delight. Good gracious! how quickly minds are changed in this world! Tell me, Mrs. Lovel, that your niece's tears have made you friendly to her engagement. I am not to be more astonished."

"What do you mean by talking like this, Mr. Lockfield?"

"Tell me," continued Mr. Lockfield, with great warmth, "that you are lamenting Mr. Grahame's departure, that

you regard me as a bearer of ill-news for making haste to inform you that he is gone. Tell me——”

“Cease, Mr. Lockfield, cease! If I am not made of flesh and blood, how can I hope to get to heaven? Tell me that, sir.”

“I say——”

“And I say that unless your heart is made of marble—which your joyous face shall not make me believe, sir—you couldn’t have witnessed Jessie’s grief without being melted. She charged me with being deficient in Christian feeling, for disliking a man I didn’t know, whose character I took at second-hand ; and though this is a most dreadful charge for me to hear, *it’s true!* What *did* I know of Mr. Grahame? Ought I to have credited Mr. Andrews’s gossip,

made malignant in all human probability by disappointment?"

"But he caused her to disobey you—to meet him alone!" stammered Mr. Lockfield.

"Was that nothing?"

"It was my fault. I had no business to impose impossible restrictions," cried Mrs. Lovel, who would probably have argued quite the other way had Mr. Lockfield defended Grahame, or had Jessie's grief not turned her obstinacy upside down.

"But surely the solid reasons you have for wishing Mr. Grahame out of Sandhaven, are not to be qualified or washed away by a few harmless and very natural tears? Consider, it is a very young girl who sheds them."

"If she hadn't begged me not to allow anybody to enter her room but myself, I'd

take you to her bedside, and you should judge for yourself whether her tears are harmless. Do you think I don't know my own sex? Because women are supposed to cry oftener than men, are they never to be allowed to cry from the heart? Jessie's tears were tears of blood, and in all my life I never saw deeper grief expressed," said Mrs. Lovel, her own eyes watering at the recollection.

"But I wonder you so violently opposed her love, since you can feel her distress so keenly."

"I opposed it on principle, Mr. Lockfield, and I suppose I may be sorry for her on principle too, I hope. Had I had a suspicion that she was so much bound up with this man, I shouldn't have acted so harshly. I never had much opinion of human love, as it's called; but I am con-

vinced Jessie is sincere. I never spoke to her, because you advised me not to, and put it into my head that if I said a word she would elope. But when I review my silence, I can't but think I acted unjustly. I told her to consider herself my child when she first came to live with me; but I have not played a mother's part in allowing her to have her own way, in never questioning her, nor showing the least anxiety about her love, or sympathy with it, or trying to get at the truth of it, and judging Mr. Grahame's character for myself, and forming my own opinion. My nervousness and fears have hurried me into injustice, and the result of it has been a scene of grief that shakes my heart to recall."

"But do consider, Mrs. Lovel, here is a grief that must be short-lived. Now

when she dries her eyes and sits down to write a letter to him, what satisfaction will you have in knowing her to be engaged to a man with nothing but tags, and chalk, and martial frippery to recommend him—exhausting her emotional capacities over a sentiment it is fifty to one he ridicules—keeping good men and rich at bay in consequence, and dying at last an indigent old maid ?”

“I can’t help it. I *must* sympathize. I can’t witness such grief as hers and reason coolly. She has been loving and faithful to me in all but this, and though I would part with much I prize that Mr. Grahame had never seen her, I *will* be just, Mr. Lockfield, and own that her disobedience was largely due to my irritable nervousness.”

“Pray don’t think that *I* would blame

her," exclaimed Mr. Lockfield, waving his hand. "Nobody can be faultless ; and her errors are, at all events, of a generous kind. She has made the common mistake of falling in love with the wrong man, and should be tenderly and gently instructed in her error, and set right. The opportunity begins now—begins with the date of Grabame's departure. Andrews is as much in love with her as ever he was, and——"

"Pray, Mr. Lockfield, do not talk to me about Mr. Andrews just now. I really don't feel in the humour to discuss him. Jessie's grief has so affected me, that I positively have not the patience to hear about the man who contributed to it!"

"What ! Mr. Andrews contributed to it!"

“Yes—he insinuated evil of his cousin, and prejudiced me, and—but I don’t want to talk about him. I am sure he is honest enough in his admiration of Jessie, and had they liked each other—but I say I don’t want to talk about him. How have I the heart to speak of his admiration, when my niece lies pale and weak as a sick infant upstairs, crying her eyes out for the lover that has gone from her?”

And with a nervous notion in her mind that Jessie might have been calling in feeble tones to her ever since she left the bedroom, she ran to the door and listened with all her might.

Mr. Lockfield observing that not very much common-sense was to be expected from an old lady whose nerves were so unstrung, and whose sympathies for the moment were altogether so perverted as

Mrs. Lovel's, left his chair, and said that he would go home now, as he had given her the news he had come to tell, and there was nothing more to detain him.

For once in her life Mrs. Lovel did not press him to stop.

CHAPTER III.

MR. ANDREWS'S FATUITY.

DO you think Mrs. Lovel's character improves, and that she is going to turn out a nice, kind, sympathetic old lady after all? It is certainly very agreeable to find her sympathizing with her niece, whose love she has been so dead against ever since the pretty inspiration first possessed the child; but how much of this sympathy is due to her nerves, and how much to her heart? That's the question. Impulse comes from the

nerves, and is impulse to be depended on ? Impulse is like the gas that remains in the pipe after the meter is turned off. You think the meter turned on ; you strike a match, apply it, and out whips a brilliant flame. How gay and kindly the room looks ! how cheerful everything ! But see, the flame dwindles, dwindles : nothing left presently but a spot of blue : all is darkness around. Where be your eyes now, Yorick ?

Certainly for one week at least after Grahame had left Sandhaven, Jessie's grief was sharp enough to keep Mrs. Lovel's sympathy in full blaze. To be sure this doesn't say much for the old lady's good sense, and nothing is more intelligible than the sneer that Lady DUNDIZZY, who has six daughters, four of whom are married to aged men of distinction and

property, levels at Jessie's aunt. But Mrs. Lovel having lived all her life in the country, was unavoidably possessed of a bucolic simplicity of soul, as certain insects take their colour from the leaves they feed on. She disliked marriage and love-making as matters of fact; but her dislike did not prevent her from taking the most innocent views of them. For instance, she never could have agreed with Lady Dundizzy that marriage was simply a lawyer's contrivance to enable women to spend men's money, and ride in men's carriages, without obliging society to cut them. Nor could she have agreed with her ladyship that money was the first object of matrimony, and rank the second; nor that old age was no obstacle, but rather an advantage, as it doubled a woman's chance of doing well by rendering it possible for her

to marry two husbands; nor that grossness, vulgarity, ugliness, and infirmity were of no moment, providing you could clap a coronet upon them and hide them in cloth of gold. One can't but smile at Mrs. Lovel's simplicity, and pity her for her ignorance or contempt of an art by which so many fortunes are yearly made, and so many mothers-in-law rendered happy and important. However, you may apologize for human nature, but you can't mend her. Mrs. Lovel's character was pretty nearly as it is here represented; if you don't like her—*tant pis*.

I say that in no article of Lady DUNDIZZY's matrimonial creed would Mrs. Lovel have acquiesced. Indeed she disliked marriage altogether, as has been said over and over again. Grahame—partly through her fears, partly through Mr. Andrews's misre-



presentations, partly through Mr. Lockfield's shrugs, and in a very great measure through the clandestine love-making he had led Jessie into—had become entirely disagreeable to her. And yet, strange to say, Mrs. Lovel's dislike of Grahame didn't help Mr. Andrews's claims and pretensions in her eyes a jot. She had certainly told Mr. Lockfield that she wouldn't have been ill-pleased had Miss Marchmont taken a fancy to his young friend, but not before she suspected that her niece had taken a fancy to Mr. Grahame. Of the two evils she preferred the least. Of the two young men she preferred Mr. Andrews. She knew *him*—she knew his sister—she knew he had money enough to support a wife—she had an idea that, as Mrs. Andrews, Jessie would be able to do a great deal of good—Mr. Lockfield was his friend and

advocate—and whatever character he might bear in London, she had never heard anything against him in Sandhaven. Now Mr. Grahame—

But the simple fact was, she didn't want Jessie to marry anybody.

And yet Jessie's sorrowful pale face, her heavy eyes which told of secret weeping, touched the old lady very nearly. She must be kind to this poor little orphan who was suffering such real grief. That grief was indeed of her own bringing about—was romantic, idle, sentimental—but that did not lighten its weight, nor make her tears less scalding. It would wear itself out in time, no doubt, as Mr. Lockfield had sagaciously suggested; but whilst it lasted, she must say nothing to increase its bitterness, make no allusion that could add a pang to it—on the contrary, dimly

and covertly (so that conscience should not be alarmed) drop comforting words of hope, mutter vague assurances of reunion, minister, in short, as far as she dared to the girl's sadness, and illumine it with as much sunshine as her old heart felt justified in shedding.

We need not feel the less kindly towards Mrs. Lovel for sacrificing her prejudices to the healing of Jessie's wound. Prejudice is undoubtedly a very fine thing, and whether it has marriage, or the Poor, or Reform, or tail-coats, or the Irish as an object, ought to be maintained inviolable, certainly, by all means. But look you, Sir John, or Sir Thomas, you who from your throne of old bones wheeze out your love of prejudice to an attentive crowd of ploughmen, you must admit that prejudice may sometimes be carried too far, as in the

case of your rector's wife, who won't have a Dissenter for a servant on any account ; as in the case of Luther Churchman, who very coolly, and in the name of God, breaks his child's heart rather than let her marry the Catholic gentleman who will do anything but quit the faith his mother taught him, to win her. See yonder little heap of dust. Are we not all made of that stuff, Sir John, or are you too prejudiced to believe it ? That little heap represents a human life which you hated when it walked and breathed because it bowed to the east when you worshipped with your face to the west. Those two cats fighting near that heap won't respect it, will they ? See ! their claws are already in it, and the dust is scattered along with some fur and many yells. Irreverend cats ! Irreverend dog, Sir John ! why should a cat respect



the dust of a human being you hated, and had no reverence for in flesh and blood ?

Mrs. Lovel might feel assured that no honest heart would think the worse of her, because she hid her prejudices behind her back, and sat upon them, whilst she did all her conscience would let her do to inspirit her orphan niece, and to prove that the earth was not all a desert, nor the heavens all an eclipse, because there was one sorrow more come to dwell for a time among the children of men.

So the days slipped by, and Jessie plucked up heart, and thought of the time when the mail would bring her a letter—to which she looked forward with indescribable longing. The sands were dear to her beyond expression. All places he had met her in, spoken his fond words to her in, became beautiful to her. Whether

to have loved and lost is better than not to have loved at all, is a question we will leave our friend Jones, whom we met yesterday looking like a corpse, to argue with the poet ; but it is certainly better to have loved than not to have loved, for then do we make ourselves the possessor of a sentiment than which—let Jones think what he will, few emotions are more compensating. The capacity becomes ours to infuse life, and beauty, and sweetness into the commonplace, into an old glove, a scrap of paper, a battered locket. The poet can't achieve anything higher.

And what a love grew up in Jessie's heart for her goat ! It was doubly dear to her now, for her father's and lover's sake. For whose sake did she prize it the most, I wonder ? Doesn't Corneille make one of his heroines prefer sacrificing her

papa to her adored? Yes, mon chere père, je t'aime very much indeed; but I love mon Alphonse of the eyes perfectly beautiful, and of the moustache exquisitely curled, and of the complexion absolutely superb, a great deal better; therefore, mon cher père, les barbares must kill you that Alphonse may live. Well, if the lover doesn't stand first in a woman's heart, he ought to stand nowhere. Kitty may tell her mamma that she is dearer to her than William is: but if Kitty's mamma believes this, Kitty will be quite right in suspecting her mamma's sanity.

Dear goat! sweet little split-feet! what long walks Jessie took with you when she managed to overcome the grief of her parting with Grahame. Who wouldn't be a goat, to have so white an arm as Jessie's flung round one's neck, so soft and rosy a

pair of lips pressed to one's ear? She talked to Bijou of Robert—told Bijou that Robert would one day come home from India and marry her, and conveyed a heap of other valuable pieces of information into the goat's ear, to all which Monsieur Chèvre listened with solemnity and penetration, such as indeed properly befitted the increasing length of his beard.

And certainly if Jessie's love affair had done no other good, it had succeeded in bringing her aunt and her closer together than ever they were before, which is a really extraordinary fact when we consider the means by which this union was effected, and well deserving the attention of some member of a debating club who likes metaphysics, and is knowing in the matter of antagonistic affinities. I have said—and it is true—that no woman, when she liked,

could make herself more thoroughly lovable than Mrs. Lovel. No doubt a great number of her virtues were to be applauded as you applaud some sauces—with tears in your eyes; but besides these tart and pungent excellences she had many most gracious and sunshiny characteristics, which when she chose to exercise them, rendered her a truly delightful person. Jessie's grief had brought them into play, and they lasted a good long time after that grief had given way to maidenly hopes and sweet anticipations. The girl was most grateful to the old lady for her sympathy. She had never expected it. She showed her gratitude in a hundred ways, by a hundred little actions, little attentions, and then indeed did her nature appear a lovely one. It was true that neither of them spoke much of Mr. Grahame; Mrs. Lovel was

afraid of the subject, and never could be induced by Jessie to talk about it. But Jessie excused her reluctance ; she believed that her aunt was now friendly towards her lover in her heart, and that, if she would only give her prejudices time, they would decay out of her, and a liking for the young fellow whom Jessie loved so well grow up in their room.

Meanwhile don't let it be supposed that Mr. Lockfield and Mr. Andrews were idle. A conversation had taken place at Springfield House on the evening of the day on which Mr. Grahame had left Sandhaven which must on no account be omitted.

It was Mr. Lockfield's object to let Mr. Andrews know he took a very great interest in his love, and that no efforts, so far as he was concerned, should be spared to make

the young gentleman entirely happy in his wishes. As it was just likely that Mr. Andrews had not heard his cousin had left, Mr. Lockfield thought he would walk over to Springfield House and give him the news.

But Mr. Andrews *had* heard that afternoon from Bessie, who had received a note from Grahame bidding her farewell, and regretting the quarrel that prevented him from calling on her.

"I should like to know what business he had to write to my sister," says Mr. Andrews. "I call it impudence, that's what *I* call it. However he's gone, and of course I hope the ship he's sailed in won't be wrecked—oh, no, of course not!" and he laughs a great sarcastic laugh.

"Nay, nay, we must have no impious wishes!" cries Mr. Lockfield, disagreeably

affected by his young patron's laugh. "He's gone, as you say, and there's an end of it. Put your anger aside now, for it can do you no good and him no harm."

"All right. You're a clergyman, and I'm always willing to hear you preach. But I say, have you seen Mrs. Lovel?"

"Yes. She is affected by her niece's grief, and both her sympathy and Miss Marchmont's tears are perfectly natural. I don't think they need give you any anxiety. Miss Marchmont will soon dry her eyes, for the wells that the heart digs in the soil of sentiment don't hold very much water. When the niece's eyes are dry Mrs. Lovel's prejudices will come to the front again. At her age the habits speedily readjust themselves after being thrown into disorder."

"Oh, yes, I understand. But never

mind about her. Does Jessie take his going much to heart?"

"Oughtn't she to? You want a guarantee for your wife's love; there you have it in the tears she sheds over her separation from a man she thinks she has taken a fancy to. I wouldn't give twopence for a woman who can't cry heartily. Some of these days her tears will be for you—but then you must act properly."

"How do you mean?"

"Why," says Mr. Lockfield, "you mustn't dream of intruding upon her for some weeks. Give her eyes time to dry."

"I suppose he'll write to her."

"That remains to be seen. No doubt he'll write by one or two mails. But you know I have my theories about these martial gentlefolk. Constancy and feathers don't pair."

Mr. Andrews said nothing, but stared.

hard at Mr. Lockfield's boots. Mr. Lockfield continued expressing his opinion of officers, his conviction that Jessie was ignorant of her own heart, and so forth; but finding at last that Mr. Andrews was not listening to him, he came to a dead stop, and helped himself to a glass of sherry from a decanter on the table.

"I suppose you never talk of me to her?" says Mr. Andrews.

"As often as I think judicious. In matters of this kind the utmost care and delicacy are required to prevent one's conversation from becoming nauseous. Both she and her aunt pretty well know my opinion of you, and what I think of the prospects you offer Miss Marchmont in wishing to make her your wife. And let me tell you that if the impression I have sought to make has not very greatly

affected the niece, it has sensibly influenced Mrs. Lovel."

"Oh, confound Mrs. Lovel! I don't want to marry her! She has been in my way from the beginning, and if ever I *do* marry Jessie, it won't be *through* her but in *spite* of her. But I say, Lockfield, do you think that my cousin won't remain true to Jessie?"

"How can you doubt it?" asks Mr. Lockfield with a shrug. "Ah, she ought to have consulted me before allowing Mr. Grahame to engage her young affections. *I* could have given her a hint or two on the subject of military courtship—told her my story of Miss Sharman, who was courted by Major Lucius O'Toole—a real major, look you, not one of those self-promoted individuals who dazzle you with titles the Horse Guards ought to indict them for

assuming. O'Toole courted Miss Sharman so warmly that the whole family of Sharman's were persuaded that he was madly in love. Of course his connections—being an Irishman—were very princely : royal blood flowed in his veins, naturally ; and, I need not add, that he had an estate somewhere in Connaught. He never quitted the neighbourhood for a week without assuring everybody that he had been urged to spend some days with my Lord this or the Earl of that—though it afterwards came out that a creditor, sometimes a tailor, sometimes a bootmaker, was at the bottom of these splendid disappearances. Well, it ended in the marriage being broken off by the major, because it appeared he had mistaken that family of Sharman's for another family of the name, the young members of which were said to have large prospects, and

wealthy maiden aunts. His candour was respectable, wasn't it? This is a true history. I knew the Sharmans well, and so great a rage did the memory of this insult excite in old Sharman that he never could tell the story without loosening his neck-cloth and unbuttoning his waistcoat in order to breathe freely. Here is one instance of military affection. I could tell Miss Marchmont a dozen more."

"Why don't you?"

"Let her buy her own experience. Knowledge thus acquired makes the heart all the richer. If ever you should marry her you'll bless the name of Grahame for having so enlarged her mind as to enable it to embrace all the advantages that a union with you will yield her."

Here ends as much of that memorable conversation as I find it needful to repeat.

While we go home pondering deeply over what we have heard, don't we find ourselves astounded by Mr. Andrews's fatuity, and the absurd and miserable quality of the hopes which Mr. Lockfield gives him to support his passion on and keep it from tumbling down? But don't let us forget some important facts:

That Mr. Andrews has a very good opinion of himself; that he is desperately in love with Jessie; that his intellect is not a powerful one. His conceit makes him buoyant in a sea of circumstances, the waters of which would very speedily overwhelm a more weighty mind. He is not gifted with that inconvenient and touchy sensitiveness which would make other men drop the young lady who had plighted her troth to a rival, without a word. He believes everything that is told him which

is at all agreeable to his wishes. He is possessed, moreover, of certain dark animal passions, which interpenetrate the more lightsome emotion of his love, and render him what some harsh critic might consider brutally obstinate. Indeed had he lived in the thirteenth instead of the nineteenth century, before the passions were disciplined by the police, and when gentlemen were in the habit of making love in full suits of armour, and at the head of a band of armed retainers, it is highly probable that he would have obliged the chronicler of his life and deeds to record as gory a tale as any to be read in Mr. Pelham's New Newgate Calendar.

However, ridiculous as is the figure he cuts, swallowing his friend the rector's fallacies, and charged to the throat with as blundering and idle and hopeless a senti-

ment as ever kept a simpleton gasping in his sleep, I do maintain that he is to be accepted as a type of a larger number of youths and even men, than Mr. Puff will for an instant allow. The ladies shall decide. Tell us, Araminta, sweetest of your sex, feeling for your pencil-case that you may be ready to underscore the words you have not read, and against which you will write that exclamation so dear to authors, "*How true!*" Tell us, madam, how you were perplexed, pained, and pursued for two years by Mr. Wellington Boots of the bushy hair, great cuffs, and bell-mouthed trousers. Confess that for two years did that atrocious youth oblige you to open with a shudder every invitation to a party that reached you ; that he poisoned the waltz for you, made the atmosphere of ball-rooms oppressive, and even

snatched from your bosom the sense of security which the meanest human being is privileged at least to feel in crowds. Didn't he haunt your dreams—standing now at the door gazing pensively at you, now bending over you begging for a dance, now advancing with that odious crocus-coloured simper, and his arm triangularly posed, to solicit the pleasure of taking you down to supper? You were engaged—had been since March, everybody knew it—to a gentleman quartered at Canterbury. But not that gentleman quartered at Canterbury, with a drawn sword and most frightful frown, not the regiment he had the honour of being a captain in, not the whole of the British army with the Duke of Cambridge at its head, could have intimidated that atrocious Wellington Boots of the bell-mouthed trousers, nor scared him away

from wearing your papa's door-step into a hollow, from pursuing you in balls, from converting the loveliest flower-show in your eyes, into a wilderness of fungi. He knew you were engaged, but did he care? Nations armed, fought and shook hands: an archbishop died, and a successor was appointed; Lord Mayors were knighted, became gentlemen, and cut their old friends in aprons; taxes were imposed and remitted; general elections took place, the town was distressed with bad grammar and good intentions, and tranquillity was restored; the most important things happened and were forgotten; the most amazing changes took place, and the nation grew resigned; but amid all this endless vicissitude, Mr. Wellington Boots of the bushy hair unchangeably pursued thee, Araminta, unchangeably ignored

thy engagement, unchangeably deformed thy dreams—gave thee, in fine, no rest nor peace, until thy marriage annihilated his hopes, and a hundred miles of railroad, or a thousand miles of ocean separated him from the miserable victim he adored.

CHAPTER IV.

DISMAL NEWS.

“**N**IECE,” said Mrs. Lovel one day to Jessie, “have you noticed lately what a habit Jane has fallen into of staring at me? and really her breathing when she waits at table is becoming unsupportable. I like onions as well as anybody, and consider them a very healthy vegetable; but all the same, I wish Jane wouldn’t sigh so.”

“I certainly have noticed that she stares a great deal at you, aunt.”

“Really, I am getting quite to dislike sitting in the room when she is laying the cloth. She was always remarkable for a damp eye which used to make me think her weak in her sight. One doesn’t object to be followed by a healthy, open eye—though to be stared at is never pleasant—but there is something peculiarly oppressive in a moist gaze. There is also a vacant look in her countenance when she watches me ; one might say she had put her head into a saucepan and boiled all the expression out of it.”

“Ask her what is the matter.”

“If I do, I know what will happen—she’ll give notice.”

“I don’t see why she should.”

“She’s in love,” said the old lady. “Of that I have no doubt. And if I am not very much mistaken, I know the man—one

of Sandman's assistants. It's on her mind, I'm sure of it, to tell me she is going to be married, but is afraid to speak, as some time ago I had occasion to give her my opinion on the subject of people in her position making fools of themselves."

"I suppose the poor have as much right to marry as the rich," said Jessie.

"What on earth, niece, would be the use of a husband to Jane? Sandman's man gets, I suppose, about twelve shillings a week wages to carry out the groceries. Would twelve shillings a week support two hungry people and find them lodgings and coals? In my opinion the Lord Chancellor or some dignitary ought to heap all kinds of difficulties in the way of marriage among the poor, for then we should not only keep our servants, but there wouldn't be so many families of ten or fifteen persons

sleeping altogether in one room, with the windows closed, and a pair of trousers stuffed up the chimney to keep the cold out."

"But why shouldn't we let the poor love each other?" asked Jessie, who was unavoidably sentimental on this occasion.

"Because they seldom or never do!" cried Mrs. Lovel. "There is no kind of cant that makes me more impatient than the cant I sometimes hear about the poor man's humble, but clean home, and laborious but contented lot, and the thrifty wife whom he devotedly loves, and the children he plays with in his leisure minutes. A poor man usually marries a poor woman because her cheeks are red. They may live together perhaps six months—providing the man keeps sober—without fighting. The house they live in has com-

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monly two or three rooms, of which most of the furniture is away at the pawn-broker's. They have a great number of children, who are allowed to grow up in dirt and rags, without knowing who God is: out in the gutters all day, and only seeing their mother when they call in for the lump of bread that composes their dinner. The parish clergyman—unless he is a paragon—shirks them for fear of taking disease and insects home with him to his family. They have no sentiment, not an ounce, unless you except gin and a piece of pork on Sundays. This is the condition of a class whose numbers—as if the country was not bursting with them already—mad-women like Jane are fighting with Christian people for the privilege of swelling."

"But surely, aunt, all the poor are not so bad as you describe."

“What do you call the poor? Not the humblest class of shopkeepers. By the poor I mean the unbonnetted, grimy masses who swarm in the back alleys of cities and in the lowest streets of country towns. Nobody knows—not even the parish undertaker, the state the real poor are in. A healthy, well-fed woman, who an hour or two before skipped across the road to escape the solicitations of a beggar, sits down, after dining, and writes an essay on the condition of the poor. Her intentions may be sound, I know nothing about them; she may want to make people charitable, but she is very ignorant. She describes a poor man’s death-bed, talks of the clean sheets, the weeping, prayerful wife, the group of subdued children with well-washed faces and clean pinafores, the spotless floor, the modest, but well-scoured

kettle. A fig for her clean sheets and floors! Straw and vermin she means. Why doesn't that well-fed woman speak the truth, instead of allowing a pack of nonsense to be stitched into a weekly bundle of Sabbath reading? Why doesn't she describe little Billy running to tell mother at the public-house that father's dying and wants to see her, and mother bidding Billy not to bother her, and that she isn't sorry, for one? Representations of the poor living in clean cottages, toiling manfully, teaching their children how to pray, do them a world of injury, for it blinds charitable people who don't care to look into the truth themselves, to the real state of things, and deceives idiots like Jane, who, God knows, want no inducements to quit their mistress's kitchens and the blessed sunshine to crawl into some detestable hole,

and moulder there until they are pulled out by the relieving officer !”

The chances are, these extraordinary views would never have been expressed had not Jane taken it into her head to stare damply and sigh onions.

Mrs. Lovel was very silly to take notice of such things, or allow them to make her nervous. What need it have mattered to the old lady whether Jane was in love or not, so long as she cooked the dinner and made the beds? Why shouldn't servants fall in love as well as their betters, and fix melancholy gazes, and exhale their pain in vegetable expirations? Mr. Thackeray—who knew the kitchen as well as Dean Swift—has told us that as many sentimental tragedies take place in the basement as in the first and second floors, but that we of the first and second floors won't

think them tragedies because, forsooth ! the actors wear caps and aprons, and powdered hair and rainbow-coloured suits.

Poor Jane ! what did those damp eyes and highly-flavoured sighs express ? Had Sandman's man been making love elsewhere ? Had there been a quarrel ? I think of a lonely maid, sitting by a kitchen table, a pen in her hand, two penn'orth of coloured note-paper, and ornamental envelopes to match, before her, meditating a passionate letter to her false 'Arry. What burning words leap from her heart ! If in their upward motion from the heart to the lips, they lose a consonant or a vowel—an h or a g—if heart is artlessly spelt art, and breaking exhibits itself as brakin'—what then ? What has grammar to do with sentiment ? Is emotion contemptible when it is unlettered ? Amelia in the

drawing-room, biting her rich nether lip over her perfumed desk, while she desires Charles, the Guardsman, to take back the heart that he gave her—unless he tells her by return of post what he meant by his cowardly and unblushing flirtation with Geraldine Alexandrina De Valencort, at Lady Hop's ball—won't, to our Catholic minds, produce half the affecting letter our kitchen-maid will, though Amelia's note is made splendid with a coronet, and dainty with writing *de luxe*, while our poor maid's looks as if it had been written with a skewer dipped in a blacking-bottle, and greased with tears shed by a sympathetic farthing candle at her elbow. Ho no! the great company of lovers are like the white people and the black people, all brothers and sisters, and the want of etymology, syntax, and prosody,

ought not to make them despise each other.

Hadn't Jessie suffered ? Wasn't she still suffering ? Her heart felt the strongest motions of pity for poor Jane the moment Mrs. Lovel assigned love as a reason for her odd behaviour ; and that very same day she went into the kitchen, and with the sweetest face of sympathy asked the general servant if anything had happened to make her fret.

" Nothing, miss, I thank you," answered Jane, with a ghastly look at Jessie, and then to prove convincingly that nothing was the matter, she rushed into the scullery, where she gasped and panted and choked in the most alarming manner.

But it was drawing near to the day when Jessie expected to hear from Grahame, and can you wonder that she should soon forget

Jane's trouble and her aunt's nervousness, in the anticipation of the delight a letter from India would give her ?

It was now the month of August. How quickly the summer had passed ! and yet it seemed an eternity to Jessie since that day when she met Grahame for the last time, and wept her adieux in his arms. How ardently she longed to hear from him ! She believed that she loved him better now, when so many thousand miles were between them, than when they saw each other every day. She prayed for him night and morning. She searched in her aunt's books of prayer for some suitable form in which to convey her wishes to God, but they all seemed too stiff and laboured for her, so she made one herself, and whenever she thought of him, this prayer that he might be preserved and

restored to her, went up out of her heart, and blessed her with a child-like faith in its efficacy.

To a practical mind, it might seem a poor look-out for this little girl engaging herself to a man who professed to love her too well to marry until he could support her. But then, had she not an immense belief in his capacities? Wasn't she certain that he would soon achieve distinction and rank? Haven't-most women this sort of confidence in the men they love? Are you an author? In your Juliana's mind you have already filled the world with your fame, and the most contemptible, jealous, spiteful creature in the world, is the poor critic who does you the honour to read your book, and point out your faults. Are you a painter? See who weighs the heavier in Juliana's scales, Michael Angelo or you. Are you a

struggling banker's clerk? My dear young sir, be easy, for Juliana has made you a director and chairman of the company you are now ledgering for. Bless our beloved sweetheart's sweet heart, whatever her dear name is! and grant us all, kind heaven, the privilege of warming our shivering hopes at the holy altar of her faith in us, and kindling our cold enthusiasm with the beneficent light that, stretching far into the future of the sorriest among us, makes it regal and splendid!

Somehow or other they couldn't tell Jessie at the post-office when she might expect a letter from India. The old lady who acted the part of postmaster at Sandhaven—a duty which she diversified by the sale of note-paper, knitting-needles, and other matters—had never had an Indian letter, to her knowledge, pass

through her hands ; indeed she did not appear to know for certain whether India was in Scotland or Belgium, and whether there was a post between this kingdom and them furrin parts. But that was ridiculous. Jessie knew all about the mails. What she desired to hear was, when they were due.

But one Sunday morning Jane knocked at her door, and told her the postman had just given her a letter. Jessie bounded out of bed, and seized the precious missive. Yes, it was from Grahame. What a thin envelope ! what a queer stamp ! what a number of post-marks !

Her heart beat so violently, it almost deprived her of the power to tear open the enclosure. She pulled up the window blind, and then crept back into bed, for the carpet struck cold to her feet. With a passionate

longing to read the dear contents, she yet toyed with her desire by studying the address. Read, Jessie, read ! Silence that little bounding heart of yours ! Why delay the joy now in your hand, which you thought the day before was never to come to you ?

She drew out the enclosure, but shrank within herself involuntarily, before she had read a single line, on perceiving that the whole of this long-expected letter was contained in two pages.

“Trichinopoli, &c., &c.

“MY DEAR JESSIE,

“I don't like writing this letter to you, because I hate the idea of vexing and grieving you ; but I should be acting very unfairly and ungentlemanly if I allowed you to remain in ignorance of my altered

resolutions—altered, I do assure you, with deep regret and pain. When I left India, I was not on good terms with my mother, but she came to see me on my arrival, and greatly affected me by her kindness and love. I was always very fond of her, and the coolness that sprung up between us was entirely owing to her husband, with whom now, however, I am on the very best terms. I told my mother of my engagement to you, but she expressed herself so averse to it, from reasons which convince me it is only for my good that she argued, that after a fearful struggle with myself, I have determined to sacrifice my dearest hopes rather than lose my mother's love. You, who are an orphan, know what it is to lose a parent's love, and how, when once that love is gone, it is never to be replaced. Forgive me, Jessie, and try to think kindly

of me. If you had means, my mother would not be so violent, but she knows I have nothing, and really when I come to consider my prospects, I fear that marriage is a pleasure it will never be my privilege to taste. This will please your aunt. Ah! old people are very selfish in their exactions.

“ Believe me, dear Jessie,

“ Your sincere well-wisher,

“ ROBERT GRAHAME.”

Jessie fainted.

Now it happened that on the preceding night, Mrs. Lovel had gone into her niece's bedroom, to borrow some little article of the toilet, and as she was brushing her hair at the time, she, being somewhat absent-minded, and very short-sighted when her spectacles were off, left her own brush on Jessie's table, and took her niece's.

Jane having given Miss Marchmont the letter, had, on her way downstairs, knocked on Mrs. Lovel's door, whereupon Mrs. Lovel, who was a very punctual woman, had at once quitted her bed. Perceiving the mistake she had made on the previous night, she slipped on her dressing-gown, and taking the brush, went to Jessie's door and knocked. No answer was returned. Jessie, of course, was sound asleep. Come, it was time to get up. She knocked again, pretty smartly. No answer. "Good gracious!" thought Mrs. Lovel, "what is the meaning of this?" Thinking her knuckles didn't make sufficient noise, she hammered briskly with the hair-brush. Still no answer. And now, as if to aid her hand, the old lady's heart began to thump violently, and, as was usual with her, when anything singular happened, the dreariest

apprehensions instantly filled her mind, so that she hardly had the courage to do the only thing that, under the circumstances, remained to be done—open the door.

However, on popping her pale and working face into the room, and screwing her dim optics into their acutest point, she was at once reassured, for there was Jessie lying apparently in a sound sleep, and by the side of the bed an open letter.

Seeing this letter, Mrs. Lovel naturally picked it up ; and without having the least intention to read it, put it close against her nose to see whether it was a letter, or a bill, or what. Having mastered the superscription, which considerably astonished her, she turned to the signature, and understood at once who the letter was from, and where.

“It is very extraordinary,” thought she, looking from the letter to her niece, “that Jessie should be sleeping so quietly after hearing from Mr. Grahame.”

Then she looked at the letter again, and again at Jessie, and then at the letter, and began to wonder what sort of tone Mr. Grahame adopted towards her niece—whether it was such a letter as a gentleman should write to a lady. Before long this wondering to know developed itself into a curiosity to inquire, which very speedily grew into a determination to read. A more strictly honourable woman than Mrs. Lovel never lived, and had she had the slightest doubt that she would be acting dishonourably by reading Mr. Grahame’s letter, she would have put it down without another glance. But no scruples restrained her—because she considered that

if she didn't read the letter now, Jessie would give it her to read by-and-by ; and that if Jessie didn't give it her to read, it was not the less her duty to seize the opportunity of making herself acquainted, at very little expense of trouble, with Mr. Grahame's character, which, she reasoned, it was her business to know if Jessie ever meant to marry him.

So she read the letter.

She read it twice.

She read it three times.

It takes an elderly mind, never conspicuous for the activity of its operations, some time to receive into it a Fact, the existence of which it had not a moment before the revelation the dimmest idea. You might liken Mrs. Lovel's understanding to a piece of damp wood, which you push into the fire, and which, after blowing

out a good deal of steam, and steadily refusing to catch fire [for a long time, all at once goes off in a blaze—kindling from end to end—bursting, spitting, and crackling wildly.

After the third perusal, the meaning of the letter flashed upon her intelligence, and in a second all was aglow.

Jessie had fainted! Jessie was dead! The wretch had killed her! Help, help, Jane! ding, ding, ding, dong! went the bell. Quick, the brandy! and the cold water! and the Epsom salts! and the vinegar! and throw open the windows, and don't leave the house under any pretence, unless you want to come back and find two corpses instead of one!

After a pretty tolerable interval, Mrs. Lovel and Jane succeeded in restoring Jessie to her senses. She cast her eyes

round the room, on opening them, as though in search of the grief which she very well knew had an existence, but which she could not for the moment or two find ; and buried her face in the pillow, and moaned and cried deplorably. Mrs. Lovel felt herself entirely powerless by the side of such a sorrow, and therefore contented herself with dismissing Jane from the room, and waiting, with the tears rolling down her cheeks, and frequent ejaculations to heaven, until Jessie grew calmer.

And now—absurd as Mrs. Lovel's prejudices against love and marriage may have appeared to some of us—don't you think she had a right to consider those prejudices absolutely reasonable as she stood looking at Jessie and witnessing the suffering and misery love was causing her ? What other passion, sentiment, emotion, or feeling could

have wrought so much mischief in such a short time? Deceit, falsehood, perplexity, irritation, fears, dislike, hot words, and tears, were but a few of the effects produced by this confounded conjuror and very arch-enemy of old ladies' homes and hopes. Oh, what villains men are! Never, never could Mrs. Lovel have believed that the D—l could make any heart base enough to betray and injure so beautiful and lovable a nature as Jessie's. But hadn't Mr. Lockfield cautioned her? Hadn't Mr. Andrews told her of the doubtful reputation his cousin possessed in circles where his doings were known? Girls *will* buy their own experiences. Parsons may exhort, old ladies may fall upon their knees, but girls *will* have their own way, will insist upon knowing better than anybody else. Hadn't that been the case with Lavinia? Hadn't

Lavinia's papa implored her to pause, think, ponder, before she allowed young Marchmont to make love to her? and what was Lavinia's answer?—she eloped.

Here Jessie lifted her wet face from the pillow, and looked at her aunt.

“My dear child, my dear child,” cried out the old lady, “do restrain yourself—do treat the wretch as he deserves.”

“Oh, auntie, I can't believe it's true—I thought him a gentleman—he swore to be faithful to me—have you read his cruel letter?”

“Yes, it is a cruel letter, an unmanly, an insulting letter. Oh, I can't help the blood tingling in my old body, and if I was a man I'd—I'd like to chastise him with a stick. To talk of your means! to throw your poverty into your face! as an excuse to break his vows! Oh, my child,

in your state of mind the best comfort that can be given you will seem but cruel—and yet I am tempted to fall on my knees and thank God that this man's real character has come out before marriage made it too late for us to learn it. I can see the Lord's hand working in this. God has taken pity upon your innocence, and has obliged this poor contemptible man to relinquish you without doing you any worse harm than shocking you with his infamy."

Here another violent outbreak of grief from Jessie interrupted Mrs. Lovel. It was an irresistible paroxysm, sharp and agonizing whilst it lasted. But Jessie fought with and subdued it; and then turning her white and tear-worn face to her aunt, begged her to go and dress herself and leave her alone for a little, for she was sure she could struggle better with

her grief if no one were by to watch her.

The moment the door was closed, the poor little girl took up the letter, which her aunt had left on a chair, and read it again and again, and each time that she read it her sobs grew less convulsive, and an expression of determination hardened upon her face. It is by such blows as these that transformations are wrought in the character. An experience of peculiar severity will often crush the tenderness out of a woman's heart, or dry up those sources which in moments of passion or pity transfigure her. Thus you watch the flower fading away to the naked stalk.

Do but consider how this child loved the man: what deep longings had possessed her to hear from him. Had rumours reached her of his falseness, had she been

told of his love for another; even of his marriage with another, she would have defied and abhorred the bearer of such heart-breaking gossip, and continued to believe Grahame true to her until his own word had snapped the golden cord that bound her heart to his. But this letter! here could be no deceit—no foul trick of malice. That was his handwriting—that was his signature. No gleam, indeed, of the nature she thought she knew so well and loved so tenderly, brightened upon the coarse and cruel language of the letter; but—and when suspicion is excited, jealousy maddened, and hope mortally wounded, the heart is hurried into the ugliest and darkest conclusions—this letter represented his character unmasked, while the character she remembered him by was no more than a painted deceit.



Don't think that the promises he had made, the love that had shone in his eyes, the dear kisses with which they had consecrated each other's vows, the bright skies that had beamed over their heads, and the music the sea made to fill their intervals of silence, were forgotten, or that they would have lost their potency to deepen the fervency of her faith had any other sign than this letter been given to prove his inconstancy. His silence might have grieved, but would not have changed her. The ugliest reports had not diminished her sincerity and confidence in him. But this letter—this harsh, unmanly letter, struck her love as a bullet strikes the breast; blood dropped from the wound; the hand she had kissed and fondled had smote her, and if love did not perish, its

light went out, and all the world was so dark to her that death seemed the only kindness misery had left it in the power of heaven to show.

CHAPTER V.

MRS. LOVEL TELLS THE NEWS.

DEEP grief invests the sufferer with a kind of sanctity. Mrs. Lovel was awed by her niece. While dressing she had rehearsed many consolatory phrases, and had turned her poor old mind inside out in search of arguments that should convince Jessie nothing better could have happened to her than Grahame's cruel betrayal. But when she looked at Jessie's face, she saw that the girl had done more for herself than her

best friends could do for her. Fine language, solid arguments, practical views, were as dust weighed in the balance with that young heart's decision—a decision wrought in the extreme anguish of her soul as steel is hardened in the furnace.

It was Sunday morning—such a serene Sabbath as Herbert describes. Jessie told her aunt she did not feel strong enough to go to church, and Mrs. Lovel begged her to remain at home, and offered to keep her company. But Jessie wanted to be alone that she might answer Grahame's letter—for the need of answering that letter at once was imperative to her—and her aunt, not at all relishing the idea of absenting herself from church, did not press her offer.

The moment Mrs. Lovel left the house, Jessie went to her desk. When you have

a great grief, all inanimate nature seems to find a tongue to add impertinent matter to your sorrow. That old coat, or old dress, or old glove, or artificial rose, for which Abe Aarons would not give you "doo fardens," has it in its power to lacerate your heart so afflictingly that all Abe Aarons' money would not buy you a salve to give the pain ease. When Jessie opened her desk, that rose-wood box gave her so deep a stab that she had to bury her face in her hands for very pain and misery—because that desk hid an unfinished letter to Robert, begun but the week before, a prattling, artless letter, full of hope, and love, and constancy, to be completed when she had heard from him. She had heard from him now, and that unfinished letter must be torn up. It was of no use, of no more use than a flower which a few warm Feb-

ruary days bring out of the earth's heart, and which dies in a single night.

Isn't love a mistake? Isn't Julian a wise man who won't love, won't marry, hates children, lives for himself and in himself, makes money and keeps it, lodges in a bedroom, makes a hat last him for three years, and has a moral nature as hard and hollow as the husk of a woodlouse? Isn't he a wise man for refusing to connect himself with more ties to life than life binds a man withal? for refusing to risk mortification, insincerity, ingratitude, betrayal? No woman can deceive him; no friend can borrow his money and hate him for being in his debt; death can't make life bitter by robbing him of a beloved wife, a favourite child. Oh, Jessie, what would you give for some hollow tree where you might sit all day in gloom? So we begin with Romeo

and end with Timon ; begin with sonneteering the moon, and end by baying it.

It cost the poor heart-broken child a tremendous struggle to begin her letter. Sometimes she threw her pen down ; pride rose and made her hand nerveless ; then love came and melted her eyes ; but close behind love walked despair, who steeled her heart and turned her into stone.

But she was resolved to let him know she had received his letter, and that, so far as she was concerned, he might consider himself as free as he was before he knew her. By posting her letter next day, he would receive it in a few weeks.

So she wrote what is here set down :

“Sandhaven, &c.

“My reason for replying to your letter is not to reproach you for what you have

done, but to tell you that you are free. When you promised to be true to me I believed you, and you would have found me faithful to you unto the end had you tried me. I hope God will forgive you for breaking the vows you took in His name. I am not angry. I am too grieved and humbled for that. I can scarcely believe that it is to the Mr. Grahame whom I parted from but a few months ago, I am writing. It does not seem a reality.

“JESSIE MARCHMONT.”

She addressed an envelope, sealed the letter, and lay back in her chair, her hands clasped on her lap, her eyes fixed on the blue sky with such a look in them as is sometimes seen in the dying, who appear to behold something beyond.

Mrs. Lovel at church prayed heartily for

her poor niece. The old lady had a deep and touching faith in the efficacy of prayer, and putting her whole honest soul into her words, she implored her Father to dry the orphan's tears, to infuse peace into her heart, to give her courage to endure the heavy blow that had befallen her.

Mr. Andrews was not at church, but Mr. Lockfield was in his place as usual. Perhaps he noticed Jessie's absence ; perhaps he was struck by his old friend's sorrowful air. He certainly very often turned his eyes upon her from the pulpit, which put it into Mrs. Lovel's head to call upon him after service, and acquaint him with the unexpected grief that had darkened her little home. When, therefore, church was over, she waited for him outside the vestry. The first question he asked was, if Miss Marchmont was ill ?

"Yes—very. A dreadful thing has happened, Mr. Lockfield. I can't talk to you about it here."

All anxiety to hear the news, he conducted her to the Rectory and closed the study door. He hardly knew what to make of his old friend's manner. He never remembered seeing her so grieved and broken down.

"Oh, Mr. Lockfield, what do you think? Jessie received a letter from India this morning—from Mr. Grahame. He has broken it off with her—flung her poverty in her face. Of the many wretches I have heard of he is the worst."

Mr. Lockfield fixed a stupefied gaze upon Mr. Lovel's haggard countenance.

"Do I hear rightly," cried he, "that Mr. Grahame has broken off his engagement with Miss Marchmont?"

“Yes, in one of the cruellest, most impudent, heartless letters ever written. I feel as if I were standing on my head. Of all atrocious things, this is the worst. It has broken her heart. She is not the same woman. Her face is as hard as marble. God knows what will become of her. I am persuaded from my own observation, and from what I have heard her say, that she trusted this rascal heart and soul—believed him as true to her as she was to him. Oh, Mr. Lockfield, circumstances of this kind stagger my faith in—God forgive me!” she cried, catching herself up, “but I was going to say religion. How can a merciful Father suffer such a villain to injure and betray so perfect, trusting, and beautiful a heart as my niece’s?”

“He attended St. Michael’s—Mr. Minto should be told of this. But what did I

say?" exclaimed Mr. Lockfield, not triumphantly; on the contrary, with a really shocked face. "Didn't I tell you that he would forget her?"

"Heaven pardon him, you did."

"That these military people never mean what they say to girls? that by the very nature of their profession they are capricious, inconstant, unsettled, wandering? Heaven guard us! Surely a spirit of prophecy was working in me when I cautioned—I mean when I told you what would happen. And is this the *first* letter she has received?"

"Yes, I am sure it is. She would have told me else."

"The first! Well, I did think he would have written affectionately to her by a few mails. I did think his passion would suffer a gradual decay, not a scoundrelly extinction on a sudden. Of all extraordinary

things ! Mrs. Lovel, I am surprised—truly grieved ! Poor, poor young lady. Of course we know it is for the best—but no consolation can touch her. It is as if death robbed a mother of a sobbing, sickly infant, whose care was wearing her out ; the doctor knows that the child's death has saved the mother's life ; but the mother, the poor mother, would she not have parted with her life to save her babe ? Would not your poor niece rather have died than discovered the man she believed true a false-hearted scoundrel ? Mrs. Lovel, this is a sinful, wicked world. For your sake, for my sake, I can't regret that this has happened. It leaves her free to marry an honourable man. But for *her* tender, innocent sake, ay, even though her marriage with that man had imperilled my position and made you unhappy for life—I cannot,

I cannot help grieving to think such a sorrow should have come upon her."

And his eyes grew humid as he spoke.

"And what must I feel, Mr. Lockfield?" sobbed Mrs. Lovel, weeping freely. "She is my dead sister's legacy to me, and what duty do I owe her but to make and keep her happy? Only the other day—only last week—I made up my mind that if this man should ever return to claim her, I would not oppose their union, for I felt I had done quite enough to make her unhappy. How little has happened to gladden her since she has been my guest! There have been many quarrels, much bitterness, much ill-feeling. I could not doubt, living with her as I do, that she was deeply attached to that man, and that it was not likely any other man would ever make her happy. And so I made up my mind to tell

her some day that she might write to her lover, and inform him that auntie no longer objected to their engagement. But this morning comes that vile, vile letter. I went into her bedroom, and found her in a swoon. When I left her to go to church, there was such a hard, melancholy look on her face, that the memory of it will never quit me."

"Oh, Mrs. Lovel, we must pray for her—we must pray for her!" said Mr. Lockfield, deeply moved.

"I have been praying for her. But what can we do to comfort her?"

"I know not—I know not. We must leave her to herself. But let her feel that she has true friends who share her grief."

"Why didn't Mr. Andrews put her on her guard against that man?" cried Mrs. Lovel. "He knew his cousin's character."

"Mrs. Lovel, he told her all he dared. But wasn't the little he said misinterpreted? Knowing how that young man loved your niece—how he loves her to this day—I am astonished at his self-restraint; for, had he chosen, I dare say he could have told her quite enough stories about this lover of hers to separate them."

"He ought to have told me—and yet what good would it have done?—she *would* love him—she *would* meet him. She is punished now, but, oh! too harshly—too harshly!"

Here Mr. Lockfield insisted upon Mrs. Lovel drinking a glass of wine.

"I suspect," said he, "that Andrews will be greatly shocked when he hears of his cousin's behaviour. Not that it will displease him. No, human nature is human nature—he loves her, and will hope to win

her now. And, Mrs. Lovel, *malapropos* as the subject must seem, I do say, that if she will only consent—at some future period, of course—to become his wife, she will be acting very wisely. How much better to be mistress of such a home as Andrews's, loved and respected of all the parish, with you at hand to converse with and receive directions from for the improvement of the condition of our poor, than to be wandering about India among hordes of savages, exposed to the fury of the elements, and the deadly malice of native hostility, which, I am happy to say, originated wholly with the Methodist missionaries? Imagine her, thousands of miles from England, and deprived of the chance of being useful!"

"Don't talk to me about the army. I hate the very name. What women can see to admire in people tricked up in red

and gold, like postmen, I cannot understand !” exclaimed Mrs. Lovel, with tearful, but unaffected, disgust. “They’re all deceivers—poor talkative creatures—intolerant and affected, and fit only for the horrid butcheries they undertake to perform.”

“Amber draws straws. There are some women who gravitate very easily to what is fine-looking. Well, it is over between them ; and I do say, it is for the best, Mrs. Lovel, although I am inexpressibly grieved to hear of her suffering. I’ll call round in a day or two, and see how she is getting on, and if I can be of any use. I fancy it will be best to leave her alone for the present. Sorrow must have time to digest.”

To do Mr. Lockfield common justice, there was not the least affectation in his sympathy with Jessie. He liked her for

her aunt's sake and her own ; found something immensely refreshing in her innocent character and pretty amiability : felt towards her, in fine, almost paternally. He had thought, and still thought, that it would be a good thing for her, and her aunt, and him, if she married Andrews ; but there was so much real kindness underlying those meek characteristics on which his patron presumed, and which might make him appear somewhat contemptible in a hasty, or injudicious observer's eyes, that I really believe he would have been pleased to forfeit his hopes of improving his house, his church, and his parish through Jessie, than see her miserable and heartbroken through such treachery as Grahame had been guilty of. Possibly, as a clergyman, and a student of human nature, he would be apprehensive of the

consequences that might follow this evil-doing. "Injuries are corrupting influences," he once said in a sermon. "Wrong a fellow-creature successfully, make him suffer deeply, you embitter his views of life, bring hate into his heart, and breed many pestilential passions. Injuries seldom terminate with themselves. A man plunders another of his property; the sufferer recovers his property, and is not a shilling out of pocket. But, oh, my hearers, what is he out of his mind? how much treasure which all the gold in the world could not represent the value of, has the bad man stolen from his fellow-being's heart? A wrong is a gangrene, and a man or woman need to be a saint to prevent it spreading over the moral qualities."

Saints are rare nowadays; and Mr. Lockfield was justified in apprehending

some deeper ill to follow the wrong Grahame had done Mrs. Lovel's niece.

He looked for Andrews in church that evening, wishing to tell him what had happened ; but he was not in his pew. However, next morning, whilst he was debating whether he should walk to Springfield House, or inquire at Mrs. Lovel's after Jessie, the servant announced Mr. Andrews. The young gentleman looked very cheerful and fresh, and explained that his reason for not being at church the day before was because he had overslept himself in the morning, and having taken a long walk in the afternoon, felt too tired to leave the house in the evening.

"I suppose you have heard?" said Mr. Lockfield.

"Heard what?"

"About your cousin and Miss Marchmont."

"What of them?" asked Andrews, very anxiously.

"She received a letter yesterday morning from him, and their engagement is at an end."

"Really!" cried Mr. Andrews, pale with excitement.

"Really. Didn't I predict?"

"By Jove, you did! Why you're as far sighted as Elijah was!" exclaimed Mr. Andrews, walking about the room with great restlessness of aspect, but not exhibiting that deep-set smile which our previous knowledge of his grinning powers would lead us to look for. "Broken off! why what a fool—I mean, what a black-guard he must be! What does she say?"

"I don't know. I haven't seen her. But Mrs. Lovel, who was with me yesterday morning, tells me she is deeply affected

and very ill. Why what a heartless fellow he must be ! I can't make head or tail of him. What on earth did he mean by engaging her if he meant to break off the moment he turned his back ?”

“ Lord bless you ! this behaviour is all of a piece with the stories I heard Captain O'Grady tell of him at the club. I did my best to put Jessie on her guard. On my word, I am astonished ! and sorry too, hang me, Lockfield, if I'm not ! I oughtn't to be—but I am. It's humiliating to be connected with such a blackguard. And poor little Jessie ! Oh, she would have done much better if she had loved me instead of that fellow.”

“ There's no doubt of that. It'll follow now, I hope.”

“ And what does Mrs. Lovel think of it all ?” exclaimed Andrews, whose agitated

walk about the room illustrated his emotions in a manner you must look for in vain in his language.

“Why, of course, she’s horrified!”

“Did you read the letter?”

“No. He mentioned her poverty, I believe, as one reason for withdrawing from the engagement. Positively it would seem as if he had hunted about for insult. Dean Swift was not more gross when he wrote to one of his sweethearts that cleanliness and competency was all he asked from her.”

“This of course put Mrs. Lovel into a towering passion, hey?”

“A negro would have had better manners than to write like that,” said Mr. Lockfield, flushing up with indignation. “If a man makes a mistake let him at least back out of it politely. The more I

consider this the more amazed I am to think that he should have so arrantly deceived Miss Marchmont. Mrs. Lovel told me that her niece used to speak of your cousin as a perfect gentleman. Her very innocence ought to have protected her; for an innocent girl's perceptions are so perfectly candid that she won't make allowances for imperfections like a worldly woman will."

"Do you say she is fretting over this letter?"

"Mrs. Lovel told me she was very ill?"

"I should like to go and sympathize with her. She ought to know how sorry I am, and how ashamed I feel that such a wrong should have been done her by a relation of mine. Would there be any harm, do you think, if I called, or dropped

Mrs. Lovel a note, expressing my sympathy?"

"Well, just now, I think any condolence would be a little premature. I shall be calling there to-morrow and will convey your regrets."

"Oh, don't say regrets. Find some stronger word than that. If you call why can't I?"

"You see I'm a clergyman, and an old friend of Mrs. Lovel. Now Miss Marchmont knows you are in love with her, and—well, I think it would be more delicate if you were to keep away for a week or two. She'll like you all the better for your reserve."

"But don't forget to say how deeply I sympathize."

"Leave it to me."

The young gentleman had not exhibited

that overwhelming astonishment and joy which, if Mr. Lockfield had given the matter a thought, he would have looked for. Perhaps he was ashamed of his cousin ; perhaps he doubted whether the loss of Grahame's love would improve his own claims upon Jessie's affection. But very probably he was really too astounded by the unexpected news to appear astonished. Fright doesn't set everybody's hair on end. Joy doesn't make everybody blubber. The same emotion will produce different effects among different people, as one wind blown into an organ changes its notes according to the pipe it passes through. Mr. Andrews may therefore be allowed to have been absolutely amazed without discovering any of those signs of unconditional astonishment which another man would have exhibited.

Thought Mr. Lockfield, after his young patron had gone away, "I am pleased that he had the good taste to suppress his exultation, and sympathize with Mrs. Lovel and her niece. Though he says some very unpleasant things to me at times, and does not treat me with the respect I should exact from any other young man, yet surely his principles are sound enough, and his devotion sincere enough, to make him worthy of Miss Marchmont's hand."

CHAPTER VI.

THE WORM I' THE BUD.

MEANWHILE how fared it with poor little Jessie? Real grief is seldom so hard to bear at first as by-and-by. It takes the heart some time to compass its loss, to remember its hopes. The dead face that shall never smile upon us more, and light up with love and welcome at our approach, does not appeal to us so piteously from the pillow as that empty arm-chair shall a few days hence. That was her bird, she fed it and loved it. Ah God! its loud song pierces

our hearts more lamentably than her last sighs did. Yonder are the flowers she tended ; hide them from our eyes, for we read in them a story of bereavement that bows us down with a more crushing sense of loss and woe than that which came upon us when we felt her hand grow cold, and found that she was dead.

Thus it was with Jessie. Her perception of her sorrow grew slowly. Hour by hour some recollection came to contribute its little heap of ashes to the increasing pile. The ticking of the parlour clock told her of the moments she had passed watching the hands and waiting for the hour when she should creep away to her bedroom, and prepare for her appointment with him on the sands. There upon a side-table was a volume of poetry he had bought her ; she remembered the stanzas he had read ; what

her thoughts were while she listened to him ; how she loved him when his eyes wandered from the page to hers, and when she saw in them the secret her own heart felt, but which neither of them had words to express.

Great heaven ! Could it be that all that time was a mere empty dream—a stage of clouds whereon unsubstantial shapes had acted an unsubstantial pageant, simulating love, counterfeiting sincerity, mimicking real human feeling ? Constantly an intolerable sense of unreality possessed her. She took things in her hands and touched them, doubting their materiality. All interest went out of life. No occupation gave her pleasure. She fed and caressed her goat mechanically : but it was no longer the same Bijou it had been whilst it served as a living and breathing memorial of her

happy days, and the dumb and wise-looking recipient of her flowing hopes. She neglected the garden. She had been busy planting some shoots one Saturday; next day came his letter; and for long afterwards she would go to the parlour window and look with weary eyes at the broken soil—the pretty labour grief had suspended.

All Mrs. Lovel could do to draw her niece away from her grief she tried. She made her presents; she brought her books from the library; she took walks with her, discoursing cheerfully, receiving into her old heart as much sunshine as her sympathy would suffer, that she might shed it upon Jessie. There was no wrangling now; no arguments on religion and marriage; no side hits at the Pope; no sarcastic allusions to the French. Mrs. Lovel's virtues never

flourished better than in the atmosphere of sorrow. Happiness rendered her sensibilities combative ; but grief made them merciful, and compassionate, and generous. Jessie acquiesced in all her aunt's proposals, took her gifts, smiled when the old lady smiled. But her adaptability was quite inactive, quite lifeless. There was no momentary quickening, such as a plucked flower shows when refreshed with water, speedily as it afterwards languishes. It was a mere instinct of amiability operating in her almost unconsciously to herself.

Mr. Lockfield called and told her neatly and sympathetically how distressed Andrews was by his cousin's wickedness, and how nothing but a dread of being regarded as an intruder restrained him from telling her himself all his heart felt. She smiled sadly, and begged Mr. Lockfield to thank

his friend for his kind messages, and instantly grew absent, fixing so melancholy a gaze upon the fire that Mr. Lockfield could not help tossing his hands and making a face at Mrs. Lovel that most eloquently described his emotion.

At the old lady's request the little clergyman called frequently after this, and strove as hard as Mrs. Lovel strove to bring smiles into the poor girl's wan face. It would have provided you with a kindly and improving entertainment to have seen and heard the old people argue before Jessie, talking for the sole purpose of amusing her, and making her more resigned and cheerful by their views of life. Both would have considered it a species of sacrilege to have intruded their counsels upon her grief by direct speech; but as they justly believed that a good deal of useful knowledge

lay stored in their minds, which, could Jessie hear it, would hardly fail to supply her with fortitude, they had recourse to a very ingenious stratagem, and impressed their views upon her under the mask of disputing with each other. Would that all domestic hostilities were practised for ends so gracious !

You would hold that life was dealing quite hardly enough with the old lady in introducing into her peaceful home the grief that was making her niece so sad and pale. But when fate is in a bad temper, it never does anything by halves.

That Jane, the general servant, was in love, had long been an established conviction in Mrs. Lovel's mind ; and this conviction had served to reconcile her in a great measure to the somewhat singular behaviour which that young woman had of

late been guilty of. But this somewhat singular behaviour, instead of exhibiting any tendency to abate, grew more and more intensified.

“I cannot guess what is the matter with her,” Mrs. Lovel said to Mr. Lockfield. “Her eyes seem to grow damper every day, and she stares at me in such an extraordinary way, that I sometimes fear her mind is going. I asked her what she meant by looking at me, and told her that I objected to being stared at. But instead of answering me, she looked at Jessie, and filled the room with one of her immense sighs. Yesterday morning, determined to risk the chance of her giving me notice, I went into the kitchen and said to her, ‘Jane, on your honour as a Christian woman, have you been secretly married?’ For I believed that she had been guilty of that

wrong, and that the weight of the secret oppressed her conscience. But she answered, rather impudently I thought, 'No, ma'am, on my honour I'm a single woman,' which being said, she heaved a sigh right in my face, and ran into the scullery. What do you think is the matter with her?"

Mr. Lockfield had no idea. He suggested that if she was in love herself, she might be sympathizing with Jessie; but really, if Mrs. Lovel took his advice, she would not trouble herself with the girl so long as she got through her work.

"If I thought she was sympathizing with Jessie," said Mrs. Lovel, touched by this view of the subject, which a moment or two's reflection seemed to make somewhat probable, "I should be sorry to say anything cross to her. Of course I don't

want the girl to go ; she has been with me a good time, knows my habits, and I have always found her honest. But I wish she wouldn't sigh and stare so. Go where I will now, everything seems flavoured with onions."

However, Mr. Lockfield's suggestion tranquillized her fears about Jane, and even inclined her to think rather harshly of herself for having felt indignant with the girl. Sympathy was much rarer in this world than it ought to be, she thought; and it was her duty to encourage it, not choke it off, more particularly when it displayed its charming blossom in such heavy, uncultivated soil as Jane's mind.

I have described the weeks as passing ; but I have still got to tell of Mr. Andrews's visit.

"I have stayed quite long enough away,"

said he to Mr. Lockfield, "and if I stop away much longer, they'll think I don't mean to call at all."

So he went home, dressed himself very handsomely in a fine blue-cloth frock-coat, a white waistcoat, varnished boots, and yellow kid gloves; and taking a cane with a gold top, walked to Mrs. Lovel's house.

Both ladies were in. Mrs. Lovel received him pretty politely; Jessie gave him an almost lifeless hand to shake. He seemed a good deal struck by the change in the girl's appearance. I suppose he forgot the ugly tricks a worm i' the bud will play. Her cheeks were perfectly colourless; the hollows under her eyes darker than those of his sister; her dress fitted her loosely, for she had fallen away a good deal; her eyes had a languid droop; the eyes themselves were inexpressibly sad.

"Good heaven!" thought Andrews, jealously, "how fond she must have been of him!"

"I am sorry to see you looking so ill, Miss Marchmont," said he tenderly, and with great hesitation in his manner. "I wish Mrs. Lovel would tell me how I might make myself useful in helping her to bring back your spirits and colour. Don't you think a drive would do her good?" he asked, addressing the old lady.

"It could do her no harm. It would be a change, wouldn't it, Jessie?"

"Yes, auntie."

Change! what change was she to know? wasn't life always to be the dreary, melancholy waste it was now, where the sunshine was without warmth, and the flowers without perfume?

"I will tell my coachman to call to-

morrow morning, Mrs. Lovel. You will kindly give him your instructions, and deal with him precisely as if he were in your service."

"We are greatly obliged," said Mrs. Lovel, with her gracious, old-fashioned bow.

"I hope, Miss Marchmont, that my friend, Mr. Lockfield, gave you the messages I took the liberty of sending through him. But nothing that he or I could say could even faintly express the grief this sorrow of yours has caused me."

"I begged him to thank you for me," answered Jessie, lifting her eyes for a moment.

"I will not say that there is not something of selfishness mixed up in my sympathy," said he. "The Andrewses have always had their faults, like other men and

women ; but this is the first time in their history, I believe, in which a member of the family has miserably failed in his behaviour and duty as a gentleman."

Jessie bit her under-lip, and winced as if he had thrown something at her. Mrs. Lovel, on the other hand, was not displeased at the opportunity of talking of Mr. Grahame to one who had been all along acquainted with his character. She thought it would do Jessie good, by hardening her heart, if Grahame's rascality were more talked about before her.

"I knew very little of him," said she hardily, but not without an inward mis-giving that she was acting unkindly to Jessie in discussing him at all. "But what little I knew, or saw rather, did not delight me. The hints you gave us were very kindly meant, I am sure."



"I had no other wish, as Heaven is my judge, than to save Miss Marchmont from the trouble that has come upon her," cried Mr. Andrews.

"He was gentlemanly, no doubt," said the old lady. "But gentility is very easily counterfeited."

"An army man can't help being gentlemanly," exclaimed Mr. Andrews. "The son of a money-lender will contract a polish from mixing with the sons of gentlemen. But what constitutes a gentleman, Mrs. Lovel?"

"If nature doesn't work in a man," interrupted Mrs. Lovel, "the dancing master and the tailor won't be of much use."

"Nor the drill sergeant either," said Mr. Andrews.

"You can veneer cheap wood to make it

look like walnut, but a sixpenny penknife will pick the truth out in a moment."

"Quite true," answered Mr. Andrews, looking at Jessie.

"A gentleman," continued Mrs. Lovel, who was now on one of her hobby horses, "is a man who keeps his word."

"Yes, whether he is good looking or not," said Mr. Andrews.

"Oh, if good looks made a gentleman, you wouldn't find any better specimens of the kind than the effigies in the hairdresser's windows. I declare some of those wax men are quite lovely with their silky whiskers and pink complexions. No, Mr. Andrews, gentlemen are made by God; not by families, nor education, nor money, nor brains. Honesty, sincerity, judgment, sympathy, tenderness, tact, and reverence are the qualities that make a gentleman.



Clothe these as you will, in corduroys or in the courtier's stockings, you leave them the same thing."

"Very true," said Mr. Andrews with flattering enthusiasm. Jessie left the room.

"She cannot bear to hear his name mentioned," said Mrs. Lovel.

"I hope I haven't driven her away," exclaimed Mr. Andrews anxiously.

"No, I should say not; she feels your cousin's wickedness very keenly. He is a perfect monster."

"I cautioned you, Mrs. Lovel."

"You did. You knew him to be a rascal. But it never was with my consent that she met him, or entered into the foolish covenant which is wearing her down to a shadow; and yet, poor, sweet girl, she is so resigned and gentle under her grief, so grateful to me for what little comfort I can

give her ! *What* a misfortune that we ever knew him !”

“ Yes, for all of us ; but don't I deserve some pity ? No man could love a girl more than I love your niece. I made sure of winning her, because Mr. Lockfield had given me reason to hope that you would not oppose my wishes when you saw how sincere I was. I am afraid this blow has quite destroyed my chances. She will think all men wicked and false now, because one has deceived her.”

“ We won't talk about that, Mr. Andrews ; let us get over one trouble, if you please, before we begin another.”

“ But tell me, Mrs. Lovel, *do* you think there is any chance of her one day liking me ?” asked the infatuated young man, with his eyes beginning to glow and the colour mounting into his cheeks.

"I'd *rather* not discuss the subject," answered the old lady, shifting her position and straining a pair of very appealing eyes through her spectacles.

"But see how miserable I am likely to be if I can't get anybody to give me a word of hope."

"Oh, sir, in this world we must all do our hoping for ourselves."

"But then you live with her and know her mind."

"I believe this ; that such is her present temper, it would not cause her the least concern to hear that a plague had carried all the young men in the world out of it."

"There !" cried Mr. Andrews bitterly. "That's because *one* man has acted a rascally part. Doesn't she believe that *I* could be sincere ? That so true am I, I'd marry her to-morrow morning if she'd let me."

"Really, Mr. Andrews," exclaimed the old lady looking shocked, "I don't think I ought to listen to such light and mischievous talk. Marry her to-morrow morning? Why, what do you know of each other?"

"Good Lord!" burst out Mr. Andrews, "how long would you have a courtship last? These aren't old Testament times. We don't live as long as Job and Abraham. Nowadays a two months' wooing is thought long enough to satisfy the most unnatural prejudices!"

"I think the very name of marriage would put my niece in a sick bed just now," said Mrs. Lovel wildly.

Mr. Andrews saw that he had exhibited too much heat, and with some tact twisted the conversation back into a milder current. As he had not come to see Mrs. Lovel, but Jessie, and as there seemed no prospect of

her joining them again, he did not protract his stay. Before he took his leave, however, he had put Mrs. Lovel into a good temper, and impressed her with the conviction that, though he talked somewhat intemperately at times, he was undeniably devoted to her niece, and at bottom a really humane, sympathetic and genteel young man.

His coachman called upon Mrs. Lovel next morning—a man with short legs and a stumpy forefinger, with which, whilst he received the old lady's instructions, he constantly touched his forehead, as though he were a Roman Catholic convert for ever thwarted in his attempt to make the sign of the cross. That afternoon she and Jessie went for a drive, and next day they took another drive; but Mrs. Lovel stopped at this, and giving the coachman five shillings, thanked him for his civility and told him

that she would not want him again for the present.

Of course this brought Andrews to the house, who wished to know why Mrs. Lovel wouldn't use his carriage every day. The old lady explained that she considered she had trespassed quite far enough, as it was, upon Mr. Andrews's politeness. Mr. Andrews would not hear this ; but Mrs. Lovel was firm.

"Well, then," said he, "why not let me send Miss Marchmont a horse that she may ride? You wouldn't mind my accompanying her, would you?"

"I'd rather you should attend her than a groom, certainly. But I don't fancy she would care about riding. It's too active a pastime for her low spirits to relish."

"Will you ask her and let me know?"

"Yes, I shall have no objection to your

riding together. Indeed, anything would be welcome that should rouse her out of her melancholy."

"Then you couldn't prescribe anything better than a gallop," said Mr. Andrews, and went away in high spirits.

Mr. Lockfield who had met Jessie in the lane came in with her, and Mrs. Lovel, after greeting the clergyman, told her of Mr. Andrews's proposal.

"I don't think I should care much about riding," said Jessie shaking her head.

"Nay, don't refuse, my dear," exclaimed the clergyman, "you couldn't indulge in a healthier exercise. There is no finer tonic than a gallop."

"It's for you to choose, Jessie," said Mrs. Lovel. "As I told Mr. Andrews, I can see no objection, at this stage of our acquaintance, to his attending you."

"I don't think I have the strength to ride," answered Jessie.

"Oh, strength will come to you the moment you are in the saddle," said Mr. Lockfield. "Really, my dear, you have done penance enough, and it's now high time for you to amuse yourself a little. Come!" cried he, cheerfully, "wake up out of this dream. Gratify your friends by allowing the roses once more to bloom on your cheeks. See that bright sky; heavy clouds obscured it this morning, but they are all passed—the sun beams joyously, and all creation looks fair and beautiful. Let the gloom pass away from your heart, and life will be as bright and gay to you as ever it was. You are too young to mourn. Suffer nothing but real calamity to afflict you. Ten years hence how insignificant will all this sorrow appear to the eye of retrospect!"

And having delivered his little sermon, he smiled kindly at Jessie, rubbed his hands, and asked Mrs. Lovel if she didn't agree with him.

"Perfectly," answered the old lady. "I do believe, Jessie, a gallop will do you good."

"I will ride if you wish," answered Jessie.

"That's a good girl," said Mr. Lockfield. "Really it does my heart good to see you bent upon giving battle to the demon of melancholy."

"How about the habit?" suggested Mrs. Lovel.

"Hasn't Bessie Andrews got one?" asked the clergyman.

"But will it fit you, Jessie?"

"I dare say it will," replied Jessie.

And so it was settled that Mr. Lock-

field should bear the good news to Mr. Andrews, that Jessie had consented to accompany him in a ride, and that the habit was to be sent to Mrs. Lovel's whenever Mr. Andrews found it convenient.

"Upon my word," thought Mr. Lockfield with a chuckle, as he left the house, "things seem to be working very well together for one end. It's absurd to suppose that Jessie will continue to fret much longer over that rascal in India. Disgust and forgetfulness must come soon. Then she'll begin to think of Mr. Andrews, and contrast *his* attention and sincerity with that of his military cousin. Out of evil cometh good. There was a time," pondered he, "when I thought Peter's chance hopeless; but now his prospects seem a hundredfold better than they could have been had Graham never come upon the scene at all."

This was the substance of Mr. Lockfield's thoughts. I don't say they passed through his mind so well punctuated and strung together with such pleasing sequentiality. Other ideas were mixed up with them—agreeable ideas about his popularity in the parish, when Jessie should rule over Springfield House, about the repairing of his church, the enlargement of the Rectory, and such like matters.

“It's only a question of time,” thought he.

But time, reverend sir, is like an artfully constructed novel, the last chapters of which very often entirely confound and defeat the speculations raised by the first and second volumes.

CHAPTER VII.

JESSIE'S RIDE.

MR. ANDREWS, being all impatience for a lonely ride with Jessie, despatched a note to her by the man who brought the habit, in which he said he would be at her house next day at eleven o'clock. And no hungry creditor waiting upon an Irish colonel at the Irish colonel's own appointment could have been more punctual.

He came down the lane in fine style, upon a prancing horse, followed by a groom on the steed that was meant for Jessie. Mrs. Lovel stood in a tremendous state of

excitement at the window, and when she saw the horses at the gate, rushed out to examine the animal Jessie was to ride. Mr. Andrews had on a pair of spurs, and made his horse frisk a little, to let Mrs. Lovel see what a perfect horseman he was and what astonishing nerves he was master of. The old lady backed into the garden and closed the gate hurriedly, and talked to him over it.

"Are you sure the animal's safe for my niece to ride upon? What makes it froth so at the mouth?"

"It's the bit, mum, 'as makes that foam," says the groom.

"Isn't it rather weak in the legs? I never saw a horse with such thin legs."

"It's a thorough-bred," says Mr. Andrews proudly, while the groom smothers a laugh.

"I see it has two reins," cries Mrs. Lovel.
"Which is Jessie to use?"

"She'll know," answers Mr. Andrews.
"Don't be afraid, Mrs. Lovel. Chambers will tell you that a safer animal than this couldn't be bought for money—and *he* should know, for I had him from Lord Lightfoot, who has fifty horses in his stables."

"True, mum," says Chambers. "A infant might ride this horse, and not know him from a cradle."

Mrs. Lovel, somewhat reassured, floundered through the bushes to tell Jessie that Mr. Andrews was waiting for her. As she entered the house, Jessie came downstairs. Bessie's riding-habit, made for the poor invalid five years before, when she had the health to use it, fitted her sufficiently well, though it was somewhat tight across the

chest, and hardly did her waist justice. She looked as pale and delicate as a lily.

"Take care of yourself, my child," cried Mrs. Lovel, who felt very much as she would have done had Jessie been about to make a voyage to Australia. "Don't let him go too fast—or, if he will, refuse as *I* should to keep up with him."

Jessie gave her aunt a smile, that said very plainly, "I wish I were not going," and went to the gate, where Mr. Andrews, who had dismounted, hoisted her upon her horse in an instant.

"Ah, be careful! be careful!" screamed Mrs. Lovel from behind the gate, as the animal, feeling Jessie's weight, tossed its head, and exhibited some impatience to start.

Jessie waved her hand, away went the horse, Andrews behind, and in a

moment both riders were lost to Mrs. Lovel's gaze.

"Pray God she is not killed!" ejaculated the old lady, re-entering the house.

Jessie was very fond of riding. It was long since she had been on horseback, and there was something so exhilarating in the swift and easy canter of the fine animal she rode, that for the life of her she could not prevent her spirits from rising, though melancholy fought desperately to preserve the stronghold in which it had fortified itself. Right down the road; past the little cottage where she had been with Grahame; past rich meadow-lands and broad fields which the reapers had shorn of their late luxuriance; past smart farm-houses and picturesque road-side dwellings, they swept, cheered from time to time by little groups of children, and invariably

watched out of sight by the plodding folk they encountered in their progress.

Their pace at starting was too swift for conversation ; but not too swift to prevent Mr. Andrews from dwelling with deepening admiration on the elastic, pretty figure of his companion, and the ease and control with which she sat and managed her horse.

At last they slackened their speed.

"I hope you are enjoying it, Miss Marchmont ?"

"I am, very much, thank you."

"Do you find the horse's action easy?"

"Perfectly."

"You've already got a little colour in your face. I may consider that hopeful sign my doing, mayn't I?"

"Oh yes, if there is any such sign."

"There is, and the improvement is so

great that I shall hope to win your aunt's gratitude for producing it. I was very much afraid you would not join me. You can't tell the delight and pride your society gives me."

She pretended to examine a farm-house.

"What a heap of obstacles always come in the way of everything we want, don't they, Miss Marchmont? Long ago I wanted to ride with you as we are now doing ; but first one thing and then another thing happened, and here is my desire realized at last, though after a great deal of trouble that should never have existed. I often think fate is envious at times. No man can covet anything without his wishes and labours being obstructed by a mass of cruel trifles. I once saw a little boy trying to get at a flower that grew in a hedge. He got the flower after a frightful lot of

trouble, and picked it, but when he came out of the hedge his hands and face were full of thorns and scratches. Isn't that life? What right have thorns to grow in the way of flowers?"

"The best way is to leave the flowers alone," said Jessie.

"That is a hard thing to learn," he sighed. "We are all bound to make fools of ourselves sometimes, and to suffer in consequence. I've suffered — more than anybody could believe."

Here she pretended to examine a haystack. Why will he talk like this?

"I begged Lockfield," said he, "to tell you what my feelings were when I heard how much my cousin had made you suffer——"

"Oh, Mr. Andrews," she interrupted quickly, "don't let us talk of that. I want

to forget it. That was my folly—and I am suffering in consequence.”

He was delighted to hear her call it folly. Had she paid him a fine compliment he couldn't have felt more pleased. But he could not see how he was to tell her what he had in his mind to say if he wasn't allowed to mention Grahame.

“God forbid,” said he solemnly, “that I should add a single pang to your grief by anything I could say. But I feel I have a right to speak of this matter, because your grief is mine, and because if you have been made to suffer a great deal, I have been made to suffer just as much. I once told you what my feelings were towards you—and do you think a nature like mine changes? What, then, must I have felt when I heard you loved my cousin? Oh, Jessie, it nearly killed me!”

"Can't we talk of something else?" she cried beseechingly, feeling how entirely she was in his power, and deeply deploring that she had allowed her amiability to place her in this painful position.

"But why should this subject be disagreeable to you? I am as honest as heaven's light in this love of mine, and yet you will not permit me to breathe it. You won my love—I don't say you wished to—but you were the cause of my love, and why will you act so unjustly as to refuse to let me tell you my feelings, even though you despise them?"

"I don't despise them, Mr. Andrews. I am grateful to you for your love, and sympathy, and kindness. It is because I cannot answer you as you wish that it grieves me to hear you talk."

"But aren't you embittered by my cou-

sin's treatment? Don't you think all men bad because one is?"

"No—I don't think of other men. I wish to forget him as he has forgotten me. And if you are my friend you will help me in my struggles, and not make them bitter by reminding me of the past."

She turned her head away with a quivering lip.

"Make them bitter! if I knew how to help you to get rid of your sorrow I should be the happiest man in the world. But you won't allow me to tell you what I feel. Once only did I do so—then you scarcely listened to me—and Mrs. Lovel called me unmanly! Your struggles! yes, they may have been great, but I should like to know what my struggles have been. I have been kept awake night after night. I have argued with myself, cursed myself for per-

sisting in loving a girl who hates me, who listens to my foolish, passionate words, and then goes and promises to marry another man. Can't you understand what a blow that would be? You ought to pity me, and listen to me, for you have known disappointment, and why should you think your disappointment greater than mine? He never loved you—I did. He knew he was false when he made his promises ; I knew I was true when I told you my feelings. Think for a moment what *I* must have felt when I heard that you had promised that man to be his wife !”

The colour was in his face, and he tugged at the reins so harshly that his horse grew fretful under the ill-conditioned restraint.

“ I am very sorry,” poor Jessie answered.
“ I am very sorry for us both. I have brought a great deal of trouble with me,

and I—I sometimes wish God would take me away.”

“Why?” he burst out. “It is in your power, at all events, to make one person supremely happy. And he swears to you never to betray your trust, nor to cause you a tear, if you will but consent to be his wife.”

Juliana, what would'st thou have done? Given thy horse a little jog with thy heel, eh? and started him at a brisk canter, and left thy lover to declaim to the winds? But Jessie was touched by this infatuated young man's earnest manner, felt for him by feeling for herself, and never thought of any ruse to escape his twaddle.

“You can't want any more proofs of my devotion,” said he.

“No, no!” she cried, “I am sure you are sincere.”

“I have loved you,” he mumbled, “when

I knew you were in love with another man, and engaged to him. That looks like devotion, surely."

"But why can't we remain good friends without troubling our heads with anything else?" said Jessie, forcing a smile.

"Impossible!" he groaned. "If you won't let me love you I may as well die." And he gave her a ghastly look.

"I don't mind your loving me," she answered with singular artlessness. "I like people to love me. But you want me to love you, and I can't."

"Don't say can't—say you'll try."

"There would be no use trying. Love must come naturally, and, oh!" she sobbed, for memory overpowered her as she spoke, "I can never love again—it's all past—I believed him true—he has nearly broken my heart."

"Every woman says that after a disappointment—but it isn't true!" he cried. "I should never object to your having been in love. Girls always love somebody or other before they get married. I'll give you time to forget him. I'll do anything—but don't say you can't ever love me."

"I can't, I can't!" moaned Jessie.

Good heaven! will nothing satisfy him? won't he take a hint—a rejection—a flat, plain refusal? Must he be insulted before he'll see the truth? Oh, Eugenio, judge him not harshly. Gaze from your snug arm-chair upon that mild elderly face opposite you, and recall to mind the time when you caught that face making grimaces at you behind your back, whilst your rival shook with suppressed laughter; when she told you that she hated you; when she avoided you as a Jew pork; when she took

her oath—her oath, O Providence!—that rather than she'd marry you she'd wed a negro! All that is scarcely remembered by you now, only when at fitful intervals a kindly explosion of temper vehicles the unwelcome reminiscences, and makes you think of Emerly, who would never have used you so—who, on the contrary, was dying of love of you. She is your wife now, Eugenio, has been your wife thirty years. Do you sneer at poor Andrews? Rather cry. We are all fellow-fools in this world, and let not the old who have thrown aside the cap and bells ridicule the young because they choose gravely to equip themselves in the tintinnabulatory foolscap under which their fathers grinned at wisdom.

Hearing Jessie's reply, Mr. Andrews in a momentary passion squeezed his spurs into

his horse, which sprang forward; Jessie's followed; and away they clattered, greatly to the little girl's relief, who not only wished to put an end to her companion's melancholy groaning, but wanted to get home.

There was little in the country they rode over worth describing. Here and there a windmill, or a respectable-looking residence, which seemed to have appropriated all the trees for half-a-dozen miles round, gave relief to the flat, unwooded expanse. Had they chosen to turn their horses' heads inland, they might have supplied us with an opportunity for producing a very effective and elegant descriptive piece, filled with allusions to the different colours in the sky (of course the sun would be setting, for over that orb the novelist possesses quite as much power as ever Joshua had),



the various hues of the mountain, and a portrait of the gloaming in the glen, the whole supported by a powerful company of German expressions in the original. For inland there was some little approach to scenery. But for leagues along the coast there was little more to be seen than sand-hills, and huts, and coastguard houses, and occasionally a fisherman's village in wood.

At last their horses began to slacken their speed, just as they had done on a previous occasion. But by this time they were not more than a couple of miles from home.

"If you like," said Mr. Andrews, "we can turn up that lane there, which will take us a good round, and give us another hour."

"I'd rather go home, thank you, Mr.

Andrews. I have enjoyed my ride very much indeed, and would gladly stop out longer if I didn't feel tired."

"I do wish, Jessie, before we part, that you'd withdraw that horrid word 'can't.' It's dreadful to me to hear you say can't."

"Well then, since you wish it, I will withdraw it," said Jessie, earnestly hoping that this concession would silence his importunities.

"Thank you!" he cried, effusively. "Now I shall feel happier. It's astonishing on what a little hope I could subsist if you'd only give me a little."

And he stared hard at her to see how much of her heart was in her reply. There was none at all. Her nerves, not her heart, were concerned. He seemed so eager, and looked so glowing and affec-

tionate, and kept his horse so close against hers, that she was as much frightened as if he wanted to embrace her. What a little hypocrite to pretend to have enjoyed her ride! She hadn't enjoyed it—it had been an odious trial to her; and never, on any account, would she trust herself alone with him again.

"After all," continued he, "the pronunciation of words isn't very difficult; and why, after making me very happy, can't you make me perfectly happy, by just saying three little words that I could dictate?"

"I'd rather not, Mr. Andrews. I wish you wouldn't go on talking like this. You can see I don't like it. I have said as much as I possibly can."

"Oh, Jessie," groaned he, "if I only knew how to make love properly, I'd soon get you to like me. But I'm only able to

talk to you just as I feel. I haven't studied that sort of thing like other fellows. It's an art I could master if I liked, but I won't. I never loved any girl but you before, and I am not going to be so false-hearted as to learn how to express myself properly by flirting with other women—though some men," added he, with ghastly sarcasm, "are not so scrupulous, and I know one, at least, whose power of making love neatly and pleasingly was a habit he had learned from a long experience."

Poor driveller! for heaven's sake make him hold his tongue! Let him *think* whatever nonsense he likes—commit it to paper and read it to his friends—but don't allow him to vitiate the healthy air by whining such nonsense to it. Yes—we are all sorry for him—we have most of us undergone this sort of complaint—we know what the

pain is, but we despise the wretch who writhes and howls, when he ought to set his teeth and suffer like a man. It is beyond apology. It throws a ridicule upon our finer feelings to know that such stuff ever found vent through human lips. It is like receiving a valentine in your sweetheart's writing : *Picture* : a Bloated Brute with a long nose, groggy eyes, and bow legs : *Posy* : "This is You !" How can Edward, after reading Andrews's talk, make love to Louisa as usual ? He might as well devour a leek and then breathe his vows. Novelists ought to cherish the sentiment that makes their writings popular. To make love ridiculous, I say, is to level a blow at story-telling, is to impoverish the public stock of harmless pleasure, is to filch from the artist the resources which enable him to make three volumes where twenty

lines could tell his plot, and to leave him nothing but natural scenery to fill up with. Of course laughter is obnoxious to love, because laughter means contempt. If a man in a book doesn't make love so as to keep us sad and reflective, then Mr. Novelist, for mercy's sake drop your curtain and spare our feelings. Mr. Fiddler, strike up a jig, and Mr. Solomini, step forward and divert us with a comic song; come, quick, any dramatic person, and excite our risibility with entertaining proceedings; but oh, Mr. Lover, *you* keep off. Your nonsense touches us too nearly. We recognize your groans—and groan with you because we have to laugh. Ought we, being half-hanged ourselves, to smile and jeer at the wretch in the cart going to be half-hanged too? He has a flower in his button-hole, and so had we. But we met



our torments stoically,—he is capering, grinning, grunting, screaming, rolling his eyes, causing the populace to roar with derision. Drape the gallows, Mr. Executioner. Shut out the crowd. Let nothing but a black flag tell the news; for such scenes bring Marriage into contempt, rob it of its moral, and defeat the ends of poetical justice.

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These dots relate exactly what Mr. Andrews persisted in saying to Miss Marchmont, and the blank spaces exhibit completely the effect his words produced upon her.

They gained the lane and Mrs. Lovel's house.

What time should Mr. Andrews call for Miss Marchmont to-morrow?

Thanks ; Miss Marchmont felt she would not care to ride again so soon.

Well, then, the day after to-morrow ?

Miss Marchmont was very much obliged to Mr. Andrews for his kindness, and would let him know when she would like to have another ride.

CHAPTER VIII.

OPINIONS.

HAVE been very nervous about you, my dear," said Mrs. Lovel.
"Did you enjoy it?"

"Pretty well," said Jessie.

"It has certainly given you a colour.
Was Mr. Andrews polite?"

"Sufficiently so. He means well. But
I don't care about him."

"Did he make love to you?"

"He talked a little nonsense; but I
didn't pay much attention. I felt tired,
and wanted to get home."

"Well, my child, if he admires, it is but natural that he should express his feelings. However, I shall give him no encouragement, and you can treat him as you like. You have had trouble enough to last you for a long time, and an experience, my dear, that should well qualify you to take care of yourself."

"He wants me to love him, but I told him I can't. He is hard to convince. I don't know what it is, aunt, but there is in him something that I don't like. I never feel at ease with him. He doesn't strike me as being honest."

"How honest?"

"I can't explain. I can only say that the more he tries to get me to like him, the further I shrink away. There is something *under* what he says that makes me doubt him."

“It is impossible to say. I wish to think well of all my fellow-creatures, but the longer I live the more I find out to frighten me. Young men *are* treacherous : not so much through malice and through a love of evil, as through their being ignorant of their own minds, and seldom having what you might call fixed principles. And yet, long as I have lived at Sandhaven, I have never heard any ill spoken of Mr. Andrews. I don't think Mr. Lockfield has a very high opinion of him as a man ; but he professes to believe he possèsses many good qualities ; and I am quite sure he is sincere in his theories, because he has told me he would be very glad for all our sakes to see you married to his young friend, and he certainly would not have any such wish, considering the friendly affection that subsists between him and me, if he did not

consider that Mr. Andrews would make you a good husband."

"I don't want a husband, auntie. I don't want to marry. I only wish to be loved by you."

"You may always count upon my love, my dear," answered the old lady gently. "I do believe you will never find it fail you. And for my part, I never had much faith in any other sort of love than the affection relatives have for one another. Few girls consider what a dreadful risk they run in exchanging the proved devotion of a father, or mother, or relative, for a man's promises. It is true he may keep them—but it is equally true that he may not. Only this very afternoon have I been giving Jane a lecture on marriage. She has confessed at last, niece, that Sandman's young man is her follower."

Jessie could not help smiling at the sagacious and complacent nod with which Mrs. Lovel accompanied these words.

“I was determined no longer to submit to her habit of staring at me,” continued the old lady; “and calling her to me when you were out, said to her sternly, ‘Jane, you can deceive me no longer; I know what is the cause of your singular behaviour; you are in love.’ She admitted at once that she was, but at the same time turned so pale, and stared at me so queerly, that I positively longed for you to come home, for I didn’t at all like to feel myself alone in the house with her. I’ll confess that my fear was very silly. I overcame it presently, and then asked her if Sandman’s assistant wasn’t her follower. She owned he was; but at the same time heaved a prodigious sigh, and looked unspeakably

miserable. ‘What *is* the meaning of those sighs, Jane?’ I asked. But she only sighed again, and seemed as if she would burst into tears. There is something wrong,” added the old lady, shaking her head.

“Perhaps the assistant has deserted her,” said Jessie in a melancholy voice, and sighing herself.

“And a very good thing too!” cried Mrs. Lovel. “But that won’t be her luck. I dare say the assistant has some idea that she has saved a little money; and if he has got that notion into his head, he’ll not leave her.”

“I often catch her watching me just as you describe her staring at you,” said Jessie, “and sometimes fancy that she wants to make a confidant of one of us, but is uncertain which to choose. If her

lover has deserted her, she is much to be pitied, poor girl."

And the sorrowful, sympathetic little Jessie turned her head away, and thought of *her* grief, and how cruelly she had been made to suffer by an inconstant lover.

"Really, my child," exclaimed Mrs. Lovel with great disgust, "what right have such persons as Jane to fill their heads with romance and rubbish? Love indeed! if they only did their work properly, love wouldn't make them miserable, for they'd have no leisure to think of it. How such a sentiment can manage to creep in among the grates, and saucepans, and slop-pails, and cinders, that make up their daily lives, I can't understand. If romance isn't to be choked by blacklead and dirt, it must have an extraordinarily tenacious life."

Here there seemed a probability of their

drifting into an argument they had had occasion to hold before ; but Jessie, who was in her riding-habit all this time, ended the subject by leaving the room.

CHAPTER IX.

A TREMENDOUS DISCOVERY.

R. ANDREWS has shown so much invincible stubbornness and resolution in his love, that I can well imagine a cynical reader coming to the conclusion, that he is bound to marry Jessie before the story is ended.

And why cynical? Because, Julia, it is held among misanthropical and ungenerous-minded men that any individual belonging to their sex may, if time and courage be given him, win the hand of any woman he has a mind to marry.

Whether this be true or not may be decided by authors with profound turns of mind. This is not a novel of character, nor a novel of incident, nor a prose idyl, nor a tale with a mission, and therefore any allusions to psychological phenomena would be entirely out of place.

That Mr. Andrews meant to win Jessie is undeniable. If there was any danger of his patience tiring—and there was none—Mr. Lockfield was at hand to animate him with feeling and flattering exhortations. And yet as the time passed without exhibiting any perceptible improvement in Mr. Andrews's love prospects, Mr. Lockfield could hardly help growing anxious. If Jessie refused to give in, the young patron might wear out; and then, adieu to all hope of getting the Rectory fireplaces altered, of putting a new roof to the

church, of founding an infirmary, and recovering those of his flock who had strayed into the wolfish precincts of St. Michael's.

Certainly the outlook was sufficiently hopeless. Jessie had returned Miss Andrews the riding-habit with a pretty letter, and had civilly but firmly declined to ride again with Mr. Andrews. She had also caused her aunt to refuse, with many thanks, to use his carriage. At very long intervals she called with Mrs. Lovel at Springfield House, but took great care never to be alone with Mr. Andrews.

The miserable young man called repeatedly; but his knock at the door was a signal for Jessie to retreat to her bedroom, and leave her aunt to entertain him. Mr. Lockfield represented energetically to Mrs. Lovel that she was committing a serious

blunder in not using her influence to get Jessie to like his young friend. Mrs. Lovel declared that she was determined, after the lesson she had received, never to interfere with her niece in matters that bore the least reference to the heart. After a long period of external paleness and internal fretting, Jessie, the old lady said, was beginning to recover her composure, to laugh occasionally, to take more interest in the homely details of her every-day life; and Mrs. Lovel was determined, she told Mr. Lockfield, not to say one word to her, good or bad, about Mr. Andrews, but to let her please herself. What was the use of bothering the child, she wanted to know, with a subject that teased her? She was well-rid of Mr. Grahame; she didn't want another lover; in God's name, then, let her enjoy the peace of heart she was struggling

to recover, after as bitter a disappointment as ever befell a loving girl.

Such was the state of things when the bleak and cheerless month of December arrived. What a cold month it was! The oldest inhabitant never remembered such frequent and heavy falls of snow since William the Conqueror landed. Mrs. Lovel kept up blazing fires, you may believe. Jessie liked the snow, because it made the road to Springfield House almost impassable, and not only gave her and her aunt a good excuse for not calling, but prevented Mr. Andrews from coming to see them as frequently as his custom had heretofore been. High winds blew piercingly from the north, and sang dismal legends down the chimney. But after a fortnight of snow, the great lead-coloured cloud that had stooped its breast over Sandhaven

parted, and gave place to a bright blue sky and a sun that made the snow so dazzling that Mrs. Lovel could not look out of window without the tears running down her cheeks. This pleasant change was followed by many cloudless days, with a cutting east wind that made the snow hard as iron, and drove the old folk of Sandhaven deep into the chimney corners.

The week before these sunny days came, Mrs. Lovel had enclosed some money to a London firm of hosiers, requesting them to forward by return a certain quantity of wool, which it was her intention to weave into garments for poor babies. The order had been acknowledged, but no wool sent. Day after day Mrs. Lovel waited for it. Whatever could those London people mean by taking her money and sending her no value for it? Was there any mistake?

Perhaps the parcel lay at "The Three Tuns," whither, of course, it would be brought by the coach, its label off, waiting for an owner. Jane should go and see. The maid was despatched. Mrs. Lovel watched her pass through the garden, shaking the snow off the bushes in her clumsy walk.

Jessie was at the piano, playing a gentle French tune over to herself softly. What made that tune a favourite with her? Perhaps because it was the air she had sung before Mr. Grahame that night at Springfield House. The melody brought him before her : she could see his honest eyes and manly face, and marvelled again and again in her heart that he could have deceived her. One might think she would have avoided any reference to him, however melodious. But grief is very inconsistent,

often loves to dally with its own inspiration, to suck a little pleasure out of memory.

However, I must not pretend to say that Jessie's heartache was now comparable with what had afflicted her at the beginning of her trouble. By this time she had grown used to thinking of the man as not only utterly lost to her, but as never having been in the smallest degree worthy of her. Of course memory made this conception of him dreadfully hard to realize. She looked back upon his kisses and promises, and his touching, manly language, and remembered what an upright, noble-hearted, honourable young fellow she used to think him in those days. But time has a fine trick of gently sloping our way into habits, conclusions, ends, and feelings entirely obnoxious to the stock of common-sense with which we begin our downward journey. Mr.

Lockfield was fond of comparing life to a ship's progress with a wind a few points on the bow. It was a simile that tickled and impressed his nautical audience.

"Let us, beloved, imagine our heads pointed due west—we chase the bright sun, but we don't sail west—we don't reach the port our compass points the way to. Many among my hearers understand the meaning of the word 'leeway.'"

And so he would go on. His image was a just one. Leeway has nothing to do with Jessie; but you must observe that when she received that atrocious letter from Grahame, she made up her mind to steer her little bark straight into the gaping port of melancholy—which every ancient mariner knows to lie in very cold, rainy, and dark latitudes—never to alter her course a moment, nor let go the helm, until

she had reached the dreadful haven, when down she would sit, let loose her hair, and weep away her life. However, a bit of a breeze sprung up almost ahead ; her bark's bow pointed to the melancholy port, but her bark wasn't going there. No, that breeze—which you may christen what you like, so long as you preserve the allegory—was blowing her sideways into a sunnier region than that she aimed at. Thus it was not her destiny to sight the land for which she steered, but to grow day by day more conscious of serene skies and cheerful suns.

She left the piano after a little and went to her bedroom. Meanwhile Mrs. Lovel knitted near the window, from time to time raising her eyes to watch a robin that hopped very entreatingly near the doorstep, or to look towards the gate for Jane's return.

Scarcely twenty-five minutes had passed since Jane had left the house when Mrs. Lovel beheld the gate suddenly flung wildly open and Jane rush through the garden at so headlong a pace that the snow fell in large showers from the bushes around her. The old lady, who had long cherished a stout and obstinate misgiving as to Jane's sanity, was struck with terror as she beheld the flying form, scarcely knowing whether to consider the spectacle as an illustration of a defined phase of madness or the precursor of horrible news. She threw down her knitting-needle as she heard Jane's ponderous steps thumping up the kitchen stairs, and it is twenty to one that had she found the time she would have flung herself against the door and locked it.

In shot Jane, her cheeks deadly pale, her eyes rounded with fright. •

"Oh missus! oh missus!" she yelled, flinging herself on her knees before the horrified old lady, "I've seen him! he's come! I shall be hung! Oh missus, do please forgive me, mum!"

"Get up! get up!" gasped Mrs. Lovel. "What is the meaning of this? What have you been doing? Ugh! don't touch me!" she shrieked, for grovelling Jane was trying to clasp her knees.

"Oh missus, I've seen him! He's come to denounce me! Oh, mum, please save me, mum!" panted Jane.

"Niece, niece!" screeched the old lady, maddened by the memory of a murder of an aged female by her cook, and with a feeling upon her that she was already bleeding from twenty deadly wounds.

"Oh, don't call *her*! I couldn't say it afore *her*!" cried Jane, writhing at

Mrs. Lovel's feet. "I'll tell it you all, mum, if you'll only listen to me and save me from him, mum. He's in the town—he'll be here afore long—I see him git out of the coach, and ho, mum, I've come to tell you all!"

"Who did you see? Get up off your knees! how dare you frighten me like this!" quavered Mrs. Lovel.

"I see Mr. Grahame, mum! The coach come up just as I reached the 'Three Tuns,' and he got out, mum," blubbered Jane, getting on to her feet and holding on by the table.

"Mr. Grahame! do you mean Mr. Andrews's cousin?"

"Yes, mum. He's in Sandhaven. And ho, I've wronged him and Miss Marchmont dreadfully, which has bin upon my mind ever since Mr. Andrews bribed me to do it,

mum, and that's why I sighed and longed to tell you, mum."

"What have you done?" called Mrs. Lovel, catching hold of her fright—so to speak—with all the force of her mind, and keeping it under.

"Why, mum," the girl began, sobbing piteously, "after Mr. Grahame had gone away, Mr. Andrews met me in the street and astes me if I wasn't in love, and I told him I were; and then he astes me the name of the young man as I kept company with, and I told him, and then he says, if I'll do his biddin' and keep the secret he'd pay me fifty pounds which 'ud inable me to marry and start a little business. And the temptation, mum, was greater nor a poor orphing like me, if you please, mum, could withstand, and I asted him what I were expected to do."

Here she wiped her face with her fingers and made it unspeakably dirty.

"Well—well—well?" cried Mrs. Lovel furious with anxiety.

"An' what he wanted me to do was to give him all the letters as came for Miss Marchmont which he knew I could do unbeknown to her, for the postman comes, if you please, mum, afore you're both up. I knew very well it 'ud be a wicked deed to do, and I declare, mum, as I hope to be forgiven, that I didn't know what he wanted with her letters or I'd never have stolen them from her. And then, mum, if you please, the fifty pounds was more nor I could withstand, and so when the postman come with the letter for Miss Marchmont I didn't give it her, but took it to Mr. Andrews, and he give me five pounds which he said wouldn't count in the fifty. Then

I suspect he opened the letter and put another inside it, for that evening he gave it me to give to Miss Marchmont in the morning as if I'd just taken it from the postman ; and ever since I've seen how miserable my wickedness has made the poor young lady I've been longing to confess ; and oh, mum, please forgive me, mum, and save me from him, for he'll order me to be hung !"

And having told her wretched story, down she flopped on her knees again, and blubbered wildly, and caught hold of Mrs. Lovel's legs, and writhed and twisted horribly.

Mrs. Lovel sat for some moments paralyzed by this revelation. Then with a sudden scream she broke away from Jane's hands and rushed to the door.

"Jessie ! Jessie ! Jessie !"

Jessie in the bedroom heard the piercing summons, and in the greatest possible alarm ran downstairs.

Mrs. Lovel caught her by the arm.

"Come in! come in!" she cried, "and hear the wicked story—and what Mr. Andrews has done—that sinner will tell it you."

"Oh, mum—not to her—I can't face her, mum!" groaned Jane who was on her feet again.

"Speak, speak, I command you!" bawled the old lady, whose courage had come back to her now that she had Jessie at her side, and was satisfied that the servant was not thirsting for her blood.

"Oh, mum, I can't tell her—"

Mrs. Lovel stamped her foot.

"If you don't—" cried she.

And her spectacles shot a baleful gleam

in which Jane read a hideous story of policemen, magistrates, condemned cells, frowning chaplains, white caps and mighty mobs.

"Well then, miss, if you please, miss—"

And in a voice broken by sobs and interrupted by exclamations, apologies, and grovelling entreaties for mercy, she told Jessie the story.

Mrs. Lovel looked at her niece.

The girl stared wildly from Jane to her aunt, then stepped back, and fell into a chair breathing quickly.

"Can it be true, can it be true?" she whispered.

"Talk of villains—what will Mr. Lockfield say?" burst out Mrs. Lovel.

"And is he in Sandhaven?" asked Jessie, looking the very picture of death.

"Yes, miss," sobbed and gasped Jane,

"I see him git out of the coach. And oh, miss, will you forgive me?"

"Here he is! here he is!" called out Mrs. Lovel running away from the window. "Heaven and earth! what is to happen? Oh Jessie, be calm—don't give way. He has come to you at once!"

Rap tap, rap tat! A smothered scream broke from Jane.

"Run to the door and open it quick!" shouted Mrs. Lovel.

"Oh mum, save me from him, mum!"

"Go, you wicked creature, go to the door at once, I say!"

Jessie stood up, her heart beating wildly; her mind a perfect fog of bewilderment. She was quite powerless to grasp the truth. One notion possessed her only—Robert was true!

They heard him ask for Mrs. Lovel;

they also heard Jane's gasping reply. The parlour door was pushed open, and in he came.

Jessie fled to him with a cry.

But he did not open his arms to receive her. Then down dropped her head, her body swayed, and she fell fainting against her aunt.

And now nothing could be said, nothing could be done, until she was restored. Mrs. Lovel ran for some brandy. Grahame laid the poor girl upon the sofa, saying positively not one word to Mrs. Lovel, but standing aloof, near the window, until Jessie opened her eyes.

"Oh, auntie, tell him to speak to me," she moaned.

He came to her side when he saw that she was sensible.

"I have come all the way from India,

Jessie," said he, "to ask you if you wrote this letter?" He held it up.

"It's Mr. Andrews's work, Mr. Grahame," burst out Mrs. Lovel. "My maid has confessed—Jessie will tell you all."

"Oh, Robert, forgive me for ever having doubted you," sobbed Jessie. "I received a most cruel letter, which I made sure was from you, in which you were made to say you would not marry me——"

"Show it him! show it him!" interrupted Mrs. Lovel. "Where is it?"

"In my desk."

The old lady brought the desk to her niece, who opened it and drew forth the letter.

"This is a forgery!" exclaimed Grahame. "My God! what a wrong has been done me!"

"It was your cousin's fault, not Jessie's," whimpered Mrs. Lovel.

He read and re-read the letter, dashed it upon the floor, and knelt by Jessie's side.

"My poor pet! my sweet Jessie! what a villain I have been made to seem to you!"

"Oh, Robert, dearest! I couldn't at first believe that that letter came from you. And yet when I looked at the envelope and saw that it had been posted in India, how could I doubt you had sent it? What a cruel trick! . . . This is too much for me! . . . Half an hour ago I knew nothing of all this. . . . I never dreamt of ever seeing you again. And now to find you here—to have you with me!——"

And as she showed symptoms of fainting again, Mrs. Lovel poured out a small quantity of brandy, and insisted upon her drinking it.

"And you have really come all the way

from India to inquire into this wickedness?" exclaimed the old lady, who was only able to deal with the astonishing events that came crowding upon her one by one.

"The moment I received your letter, Jessie," he said, addressing his sweetheart, whom he still supported in his arms, "I sent for leave to return to Europe. I had to represent my business as extremely urgent in order to obtain permission; but on the same day I got leave I left Trichinopoly. I was as certain as that I lived my cousin Andrews was at the bottom of it all. My idea was that he had given out I had written to say I did not want to marry you——"

"No, no! he forged your handwriting!" interrupted Mrs. Lovel vehemently.

"I was only saying what I thought. I guessed that he had contrived to intercept

my letters—because, my darling, I had written you a long letter immediately after my arrival, which, had you received, it would have put an end to any fear my cousin's lies might have excited. But is it possible that you have only just discovered this rascally trick?"

"My maid was a party to it," broke in Mrs. Lovel. "He bribed her to give him all the letters that came to this house for Jessie. Her conscience has tormented her ever since she was tempted to commit this wrong, and seeing you just now get out of the coach, and guessing you would lose no time to come here, she came rushing to confess her crime to me."

"But, Jessie, dearest Jessie! how *could* you think me capable of writing such a letter as that?" he asked, pointing to the paper on the carpet.

"What was I to believe?" Jessie sobbed, clinging to him.

"It nearly broke her heart," said Mrs. Lovel.

"What an audacious rascal he must be!" exclaimed Grahame, picking up the letter. "He has imitated my signature and handwriting very well, too. And yet, darling, had you had but a scrap of my writing by you, you would have seen that this was a forgery."

"I never saw your writing, Robert."

"No. Unfortunately there never was any occasion for us to write to each other whilst I was here. And what an extraordinary lie to concoct, to talk about my love for my mother being greater than my love for you! See! he would make me out a perfect Joseph Surface by the amount of

sentiment he fathers on me. Is he in Sandhaven?"

"Yes," answered Mrs. Lovel; and then giving a ghastly look towards the window, she suddenly cried out: "And I do believe he means to call this afternoon! Mr. Lockfield was with me yesterday, and mentioned that he and his young friend would probably look in upon us during the course of the day."

"I shall be glad to see him," said Grahame. "Oh, Jessie, my pet!" and here he fondles her and whispers.

All this time poor Mrs. Lovel had been standing. She now felt thoroughly worn out. She seated herself wearily in her arm-chair, and watched the whispering couple until their breathless conversation paused a moment, whereupon she said:

"Mr. Grahame, I dare say you have not

dined, and are faint for want of food. My servant shall cook you a chop if you will but express the wish."

Mr. Grahame was much too excited to eat. He thanked Mrs. Lovel for her politeness, but assured her that a biscuit and a little brandy and water was all that he at present needed. These things procured, she begged him to come to the fire; "And Jessie," said she, "I am quite sure you can leave the sofa now, and sit upright properly in a chair, so that we can discuss this dreadful affair becomingly."

The old lady was right. Jessie *was* quite able to leave the sofa; but she totally refused to quit her lover's side. She sat upright, but kept Grahame by her.

"So far as I am concerned," said Mrs. Lovel with agitated dignity, "I am sure I am quite willing to beg your pardon for

ever allowing so bad a man as Mr. Andrews to prejudice me against you by stories which I am now satisfied were as false as the letter my niece received."

"I am sure, Mrs. Lovel, you were justified in having the worst opinion of me if you believed what my cousin said."

"I did believe him; and he made my dear friend Mr. Lockfield think ill of you too. He aspersed you by little malignant hints, which were far more mischievous in their effect than had he come boldly out with full statements."

"He must have been dreadfully in love with you to have descended to such an unmitigable piece of villainy to win you," said Grahame smiling at Jessie.

"But I always disliked him, didn't I, auntie? I never thought he was an honest man."



And dropping the subject from that love of inconsequentiality which always distinguishes the amorous tongue, she fell to whispering to him, telling him she could not believe that he was really with her again, that she wondered her joy didn't break her heart, that only last night she had dreamt of him, and woke up crying bitterly; that oh! she loved him better now than ever she did before; with sundry other sugary sentences of a similar kind, enriched with sighs, and smiles, and tears; all which presently coming to an end——

"I think," said Mrs. Lovel passionately, "he must be the wickedest person in the world."

"Pretty nearly," answered Grahame.

"Quite," said Jessie.

"How double-faced!" continued Mrs. Lovel, whose memory was now warming up

to the occasion. "Fancy his daring to call here after forging that letter! Fancy his daring to persist in making love to Jessie, after he had perpetrated a wrong that might have killed her!"

"It nearly did," warbled Jessie. "But, thank goodness, I always hated him!"

"It is somewhat singular, though," said Grahame, "that he should very nearly have hit one truth in his letter. I *am* reconciled to my mother. I wrote to tell her I was returning to India, and she met me at Madras with her husband, who turns out to be a much better-hearted fellow than I thought him. My poor mother was overjoyed to see me—she had heard of my having been shot—and I told her all about our engagement, Jessie, and that nothing but my want of money prevented me from marrying you."

Here Mrs. Lovel twitched a little in her chair.

“Whereupon she insisted upon giving me an allowance of three hundred a year, which, she assured me, they could very well afford, for her husband is making money rapidly at Calcutta. She told me to write to you, to say how glad she will be to welcome you as my wife, and how she longs to see you. All that was in my letter, Jessie, which Mr. Andrews was obliging enough to exchange for one of his own composition.”

“Oh what a wretch ! And what a kind woman your mother is ! And to think that all this time I should have fancied you false to me——”

Here a gush of tears suspended the conversation, and gave Mr. Grahame an opportunity of kissing the pearly drops away, right under Mrs. Lovel’s nose.

“What a journey for you to make, sir, all the way from India!” cried the old lady, not choosing to notice this rather bare-faced bit of love-making.

“I would have come from the moon,” said Grahame, “rather than have lost this little pet.”

And some more fondling takes place.

“Pray take another biscuit, Mr. Grahame. And what time does it occupy to come from India?”

“A month or six weeks.”

“Good gracious! what a fearful lot of travelling, to be sure!”

“It takes four months round the Cape—but *we’ll* go overland, my own,” says he to Jessie.

And Jessie blushed brightly, and looked at her aunt, and then looked at her sweetheart; and then her spirits, like a bird that

has long been a prisoner, soaring straight away into the heavens, rise high, and she breaks into a merry laugh, not innocent of hysteria.

But even as she laughs, Mrs. Lovel, looking towards the window, gives a mighty jump in her chair, and shrieks out,

“There they are—both of them, as I thought!”

CHAPTER X.

A PLEASING FINALE.

LL the way from the Rectory to Mrs. Lovel's garden-gate, Mr. Lockfield and Mr. Andrews had been talking about Jessie.

The little clergyman had been induced to accompany his young patron by the young patron saying to him : "I always find that when you are with me, Mrs. Lovel treats me more politely ; and I like to be treated politely before Jessie, because it makes me more dignified in her eyes, and

gives her an idea, as it were, of the sort of respect other people treat me with." Upon which, Mr. Lockfield, who was always willing to oblige his young friend, told Mr. Andrews to call for him at four o'clock: "so that," said he, "we may stand a chance of being asked to tea, which I know is an invitation you won't consider a bore."

The two gentlemen walked up the front garden, Mr. Lockfield looking comically small in his cloak, Mr. Andrews, of course, beautifully dressed in a new top-coat with a fur collar and cuffs.

They knocked at the door, and Jane presented herself, her face raw with tears. Mr. Andrews gazed at her very gloomily; but Mr. Lockfield, giving him a nudge, whispered: "Mrs. Lovel has been at her again for having a lover;" grinned, and

with that grin on his face, entered the parlour, followed by Mr. Andrews.

But no sooner were both gentlemen in the room, than they came to a dead halt. So dead was the halt they made indeed, that no actor in a pantomime pretending to become a fossil under the magic wave of harlequin's wand, could have exhibited an attitude more stony and stirless than they. The inmates of the room were all on their feet. There, holding on by the table, rigid, shining, and glaring, was Mrs. Lovel; opposite the fireplace stood Mr. Grahame, and close beside him was Miss Marchmont.

"Upon my word!" burst out Mr. Lockfield, "this *is* unexpected! In the name of all that's wonderful, where have *you* dropped from, Mr. Grahame?"

But to this salutation Mr. Grahame

made no answer ; he was busy looking at Andrews, whose yellow face resembled as much as possible that of the inmate of a coffin, exposed by a gravedigger, after having been interred a fortnight.

“ You look puzzled, cousin,” says Mr. Grahame. “ I suppose you didn’t expect to meet me here ? ”

“ Pray, Mrs. Lovel, what has happened ? ” asks Mr. Lockfield, amazed by the presence of Grahame, by the old lady not greeting him, by everybody standing, and by nobody asking him to take a chair.

“ Oh, Mr. Lockfield ! ” cries the old lady, “ there is a shocking story for you to hear.”

“ What are you looking at me like that for ? ” calls out Mr. Andrews to his cousin.

What is the miserable young man to say, or do, or think? He doesn't know how much of his neat little experiment to win Jessie has been found out; that Jane has betrayed him; that Mrs. Lovel is watching him as if he were a waxen effigy of the greatest rascal in Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors.

"Look here," says Grahame, holding up the letter. "You wrote this. Put it in your pocket, and let's have the letter I wrote to Miss Marchmont, for I want her to see that I was as true to her when I reached India as I was when I left Sandhaven."

"What's all this about?" cries Mr. Lockfield. "Mr. Andrews, what is your cousin saying?"

"He's a liar!" shrieks Andrews, "and is telling an infernal falsehood to injure

me, and by God! I'll fight him if he likes!"

Jessie looks into her sweetheart's face, and grasps his arm.

"Don't lose your temper with him, Robert," she whispers quickly.

"I won't have any swearing in my house," says Mrs. Lovel, pale with wrath that any man should dare to take God's Name in vain in her presence.

"Will somebody explain?" bawls Mr. Lockfield.

"I will," says Mr. Grahame. "First of all, read this letter."

The clergyman runs his eyes over it, and exclaims, "Well, sir, it's yours—it has your name to it."

"It's not his!" cry Jessie and Mrs. Lovel together. "It's a forgery by Mr. Andrews."

The little man whips round on his heels and stares at his patron.

"It's all a lie! and I'll fight him if he likes! a great cur to come here and cast reflections upon my honour behind my back," mumbles Mr. Andrews with a ghastly face.

"Oh, have Jane up! have Jane up!" screeches Mrs. Lovel, and rushes to the bell-rope and pulls it like a woman bent upon committing suicide in a shower-bath.

"Keep that girl out! I'm not going to meet her! I'm not going to lower myself by arguing with a servant! I haven't come here to be insulted, and I'll go!" says Mr. Andrews, making for the door.

"No you won't," says Mr. Grahame, pulling him back. "You shan't go till you've told us what you meant by writing



this letter to Miss Marchmont in my name."

"How dare you touch me! what do you mean?" gasps Mr. Andrews, turning livid the moment he feels Grahame's fingers.

"If all this is false, why don't you contradict it, and prove it false, Andrews?" says the stupefied clergyman.

Here Jane comes in, dropping curtsies, and heaving one enormous sigh, instantly fills the room with a flavour of garlic. Oh, heaven! how much misery, remorse, and terror are condensed in the poor girl's face!

"Jane," screams Mrs. Lovel, "Mr. Andrews denies everything, and says you're a liar!"

"I ain't—I've told the truth, mum," gurgles Jane.

"What do you charge Mr. Andrews

with?" asks Mr. Lockfield, frowning like a magistrate.

"He come to me, please, reverend sir," whines Jane, "and orfers me fifty pound if I'll give him hany letters as come for Miss Marchmont—and oh, sir, yer did, and I ain't a liar!" says she to Mr. Andrews.

"But did you give him any letters?"

"Yes, reverend sir, that letter as come for Miss Marchmont one Saturday morning, and I give it him, and he give it me back in the hevening, and I took it to her next morning, and I know yer changed the inside, yer did" (to Mr. Andrews), "because the henvelope wasn't so full as when I give it yer! and oh, reverend sir, and please, Mrs. Lovel and Miss Marchmont, mum, and Mr. Grahame likewise, if you please, I'll fall upon my knees and humbly ask

all your pardings if you'll please to forgive me this onced; and I'm telling the truth, and Mr. Andrews knows I ain't a liar. I'll give him back his five pounds, and I never would ha' done it but for his promisin' to set me up in business what 'ud enable me to marry, and please, reverend sir, I'm an orphing sir, and ain't got no friends, sir."

"I haven't come here to be insulted!" cries Mr. Andrews. "By God!"—(Mrs. Lovel stops her ears)—"I'm a gentleman, and keep servants that wouldn't sit in the company of such a dirty wretch as this!"

"But for heaven's sake, Andrews, say that this dreadful charge isn't true!" says Mr. Lockfield.

"It is true, Mr. Lockfield," exclaims Grahame. "I never wrote that letter.

The girl is quite right when she says that the letter the postman gave her contained more than the one Mr. Andrews returned to her, for my letter was written on four sheets of paper."

Mr. Lockfield gazes at the letter mechanically. He can scarcely credit what he hears.

"But the *motive* is plain! the *motive* is plain!" cries out Mrs. Lovel, more exasperated than ever against Andrews for having dared to swear a second time in her presence. "Mr. Grahame went out to India engaged to my niece, and this letter was a cowardly ruse of Mr. Andrews, who made sure it would separate them and give him liberty to renew his addresses to Jessie."

"He thought, no doubt," continues Mr. Grahame, addressing Mr. Lockfield as

though Mr. Andrews were not present, "that Jessie would not answer such a letter, and that I should misconstrue her silence and think her false. Were you to deliver all the letters that came for Miss Marchmont to Mr. Andrews?" he asks Jane.

"Yes, sir, please, sir, all of them. He said one might come every month."

"That ought to satisfy you, Mr. Lockfield."

"I'm not going to stand this!" bawls Andrews. "If you like to believe a servant before a gentleman, you may."

"Oh, Andrews, what could have tempted you—" begins Mr. Lockfield.

"Don't you begin to preach. Why don't you let me go?" he cries to Grahame, who stands between him and the door. "There are five to one, or you wouldn't be so brave!"

"Oh, let him go away," says Jessie.

The miserable young man gives her a bloodshot look, and then seeing Grahame walking over to the window, darts through the door, rushes through the garden, and vanishes.

"Great heaven!" exclaims Mr. Lockfield, sinking into a chair, "his terror is his confession. I never, never could have believed him capable of so unmanly a wrong."

"Nor I—nor I!" cries Mrs. Lovel. "Jealousy may make a man do much—but this is awful!"

"Only think what he has made me suffer," says Jessie, catching hold of her lover's hand.

"I never could have believed it!" continues Mr. Lockfield. "Am I in any way—in the smallest way responsible for this?"

I pray not—I believe not. I did give him all the encouragement I could to win Miss Marchmont; I endeavoured to induce you, Mrs. Lovel, to countenance his love. But had I had the least suspicion that he was sapping by such cruel and wicked means a devotion which Mr. Grahame's behaviour convinces me is truly ardent and noble, I would have dropped and avoided him as I would a leper."

"Please, mum, may I go?" says Jane, who stands near the door.

"Yes, you may go," answers Mrs. Lovel.

"And please, mum, will you all forgive me this once, if you please, mum?"

"I must have time to consider," says Mrs. Lovel sternly; and she dismisses the sobbing maid with a wave of the hand.

"We must forgive her," cries Jessie.

"She was dreadfully tempted."

“Yes, and her confession has helped us to get at the truth easily,” says Grahame.

“Thus it is that one sinner always makes another,” laments Mr. Lockfield. “No man can commit a wrong without jeopardizing the immortal souls of others besides his own. Miss Marchmont, or let me call you Jessie, for I have known you long enough now to claim that privilege,” says he, taking her hand; “I must ask you and Mr. Grahame’s pardon for ever having opposed your dearest wishes by my arguments and influence. At the same time, let me assure you, Jessie, that I was actuated in all I did by the sincerest interest in your own and your aunt’s welfare. I knew Mr. Andrews to be a rich man, and up to this moment I believed him an honourable man—though



I was never blind to many glaring faults in his character—and I thought he would make you a good husband. He had prejudiced me against Mr. Grahame by certain vicious hints he had let fall, though I ought to be candid enough to own that your preference for Mr. Grahame also aggravated those prejudices, because I saw that your affection for him would interfere with the hopes I had of seeing you Mr. Andrews's wife. For all this, and more, I can only ask yours, and Mr. Grahame's, and Mrs. Lovel's pardon."

"Oh, Mr. Lockfield," says Mrs. Lovel, "no one could doubt the honesty of *your* intentions."

"I can only trust," says Mr. Grahame, shaking Mr. Lockfield heartily by the hand, "that you will give yourself no concern whatever by thinking of the past. If

this melancholy piece of rascality establishes me in your good opinion, and makes us friends, it would be ungracious of me to regret that it should have happened."

"And I am sure I shall always love you for aunt's sake," warbles Jessie.

"But I don't think," continues Mr. Lockfield, "that my contrition would make you half the reparation you are entitled to claim, if I didn't heart and soul throw the good wishes and arguments which I have hitherto bestowed upon a worthless young man into your interests. Mrs. Lovel, you cannot any longer doubt Mr. Grahame's sincerity, nor the manly and uncommon devotion he exhibits for Jessie. The performance, ma'am, of a journey of many thousand miles to justify his promises and prove his love, is an illustration of loyalty so rarely to be met with in this world, that we

should be acting irreverently and irreli-
giously, Mrs. Lovel, did we decline to
witness its beauty and welcome it as a
proof that human nature is still capable of
self-sacrifice and pure deeds."

"Yes, yes," cries the old lady, "I own I
am much struck—much struck."

"Remember, Mrs. Lovel," continues the
clergyman, "that you confessed to me,
some time ago, that had you been aware
Jessie was so devoted to Mr. Grahame, you
would not have stood in the way of their
love. *Now* you are not only sure of Jessie's
but of her lover's sincerity, and I call upon
you, ma'am, to confirm their happiness by
joining their hands."

"Oh, Mr. Lockfield, . . . just now . . . I
am really so agitated——"

"What! can you hesitate?" cries Mr.
Lockfield. "Surely, surely you ought to

jump at the privilege of making them the best amends you can for the trouble and sorrow we have all of us caused them. I tell you what, Mrs. Lovel, if *you* don't join their hands *I* will; and if I join them, I shall probably be induced to go through the marriage-service—and then your consent won't be wanted."

And so saying, he takes Jessie's hand and conducts her to her aunt, and calls to Mr. Grahame; whereupon Mrs. Lovel, driven absolutely into a corner, stands up, puts the lovers' hands together, and, after mumbling a blessing, bursts into tears, and weeps convulsively. Jessie cries too, of course. Bless your heart! what would love-making, and parental benedictions, and weddings be without tears? Isn't that the sweetest month in all the year in which the flowers peep out of the earth,

and the trees sprout their delicate leaves, and birds sing with clear and loud rejoicings? And isn't that the month of rain and sunshine? Tears and smiles, I say, are the fit accompaniment for the April of a maiden's life; for that's the time when the flowers are growing, and the forest-birds are making pure music, and when young hearts are beating, and young eyes glowing as they will never beat and glow again.

An hour later you would have beheld

"A little party in a parlour"

drinking tea; and if it wasn't a boisterously merry party it was a very good-humoured one; and if Mr. Lockfield thought of Mr. Andrews and his living, he didn't look as if he did; and if Grahame talked of India, and his mother, and his brighter prospects, and his journey home, and his

feelings when he received Jessie's letter, he at least appeared to find a very attentive and interested listener in Mrs. Lovel ; and if Jessie sometimes squeezed Grahame's hand under the table, Grahame didn't seem much to mind.

The young gentleman had left his port-manteau at the "Three Tuns," where he had also engaged a bedroom ; and as Mr. Lockfield's house didn't stand very far away from that inn, the two gentlemen, when ten o'clock had struck, and warned them that it was time to let the old lady seek her bed, quitted the house together. It was a bright, moonlight night ; and as they walked Mr. Lockfield took Mr. Grahame's arm, and repeated over and over again how bitterly he lamented his interference, and how atrociously wicked he considered Mr. Andrews's conduct.

“I will make it my duty now,” said he, “to consider whether I ought to occupy a living in the gift of a man whose conduct has been so truly detestable. Of course I am well aware that people would naturally ask what this young man’s conduct has to do with his patronage, and whether I am less likely to be of use to my parishioners because Mr. Andrews is capable of evil-doing than were he a virtuous youth. I don’t mean to say,” added he, looking up to the moon, “that such a view wouldn’t stagger my reasoning; but still—conscience is conscience, Mr. Grahame.”

“Take my advice, and don’t resign your living because my cousin is a black-guard.”

“You think I should not,” said Mr. Lockfield with great anxiety.

“Why should you? If every clergyman

should resign his living whose patron was not a moral man, how many pulpits would be filled ?”

“ Upon my word that is a very original and striking view of the subject. Really I don’t see, after all, why I *need* resign my living because of Mr. Andrews’s principles.”

“ Somebody must fill this living, and why not you as well as any other man ?” asked Grahame.

“ That’s just what I think. I am obliged to you for your opinion, Mr. Grahame. Suppose I resign this living, in all probability Mahony will get it. Now if any principle were involved in the retention of a living in the gift of a bad man, Mahony could not accept Mr. Andrews as a patron. What is bad for Dick is bad for Jerry. Judged in this light, my poor parishioners would have no clergyman.”

“Stick to your living, Mr. Lockfield,” said Mr. Grahame.

“I will, sir; and I am indebted to you for your advice. Yonder is my house, pray step in and join me in a glass of whiskey.”

But Grahame declined; he was tired out, so they shook hands and parted, Mr. Lockfield overpowering his companion with civilities and compliments as he bade him adieu.

Rather early next morning Mr. Grahame left the “Three Tuns,” and walked rapidly in the direction of Springfield House. He had a riding-whip in his hand, which he had borrowed from the landlord under some pretence or other, and as he walked he very frequently flogged the air with it, much, indeed, as though he were chastising some obnoxious vision that was perpetually tumbling across his path.

Reaching the gate, he pulled the bell and was admitted by the porter, of whom he asked no questions, but marched to the door of the house, on which he beat a rattling and ominous tattoo. A man-servant presented himself.

“Is Mr. Andrews in?”

“No, sir.”

“Where is he?”

“Gone to London, sir.”

“When did he leave?”

“Last night, sir;” and the man faintly grinned as he glanced from the young officer’s face to the young officer’s riding-whip.

“There was no means of getting to London last night, unless he drove over to C——.”

He reflected a moment and then added :
“I’ll give him the benefit of the doubt ; but

you will please tell him that my object in calling was to flog him."

The man stared, coughed, frowned, and looked behind him.

Grahame had spoken in a very loud voice, and when he had ended, waited some moments.

"Mind you give him that message," he then said, and walked away.

Mr. Grahame did not meet Mr. Andrews again.

CHAPTER XL

P.S.

UND now, how am I to end this story? By the description of the marriage? By a chapter headed "Joy bells?" Pshaw! he that seeks in this book for sentiment, must be contented to seek in vain.

What remains to be told? Hasn't Mrs. Lovel joined the lovers' hands and blessed them? She isn't one to break her word, and having given her consent to their love, the decree was as absolute in her mind as if

it had been pronounced by the Lord Chancellor.

I could tell, indeed, a pretty story of tears ; for Mr. Grahame's leave of absence was but for three months, and as he was determined to marry Jessie and carry her away to India with him, and as Jessie was as equally determined to be married and carried away, every moment that passed brought the day of separation nearer and kept the poor old lady haggard with inward fretting. In spite of the trouble Jessie had brought with her, her aunt loved her dearly. She knew how much she would miss her ; the little French songs she used to sing at the piano, the sweet voice about the house, the child-like companion of her walks, the tender little nurse in colds and headaches. But if she *would* get married what was there to do ? She knew what

her aunt's sentiments were upon that subject, that India was a land dim with cholera, and horrid with black men and snakes, and that army men were jilts and flirts. If her aunt could have saved her she would. But she refused to be saved ; and what could Mrs. Lovel do but let her go ?

However it was Mrs. Lovel's good fortune to see a great deal more of Mr. Grahame during this second visit of his to Europe than was her privilege on the occasion of his first sojourn in this part of the world ; and whether it was that her horror of Mr. Andrews's character made her peculiarly indulgent towards a gentleman whom that bad young man had done his best to defame, or that there was something in Mr. Grahame's character which won her esteem and respect, it is certain that her behaviour to him was distinguished by much gracious-

ness and courtesy and flattering approval of his sentiments. He never humoured her inconsistencies or indulged her prejudices as Mr. Andrews had done ; but though he differed from her constantly there was so much respectfulness of tone and manner in the way he did so, and so much good sense in what he said, that she would frequently own to Mr. Lockfield it did her good to argue with Mr. Grahame, because, though he was a young man, she never met anybody in her life who gave her so good a view of what she was pleased to call the other side of things.

To one prejudice, however, of hers, he deferred—he attended St. Mary's instead of St. Michael's—although he never dissembled his high church sentiments. This I quote as a shining example of his amiability and gentlemanly feeling ; for religion is one of

those matters which an ill-natured person may make peculiarly offensive, since the history of the world proves that on no other subject are men and women more sensitive, combative, and stubborn.

Mr. Grahame and Miss Marchmont were married by Mr. Lockfield at St. Mary's Church in the presence of a crowded congregation, drawn there by an event which was universally admitted to be at once novel and unique for Sandhaven. Mr. Mahony gave away the bride, while Mrs. Lovel blubbered the responses energetically under her veil. Jessie received many presents considering the limited number of her acquaintance. Mr. Lockfield contributed a silver tea service ; Mr. Mahony gave her a china ornament for the mantelpiece which would have done very well for a bedroom, if unfortunately the good-natured Irishman,

who was totally unused to making presents and speeches, had not let it fall whilst in the act of presenting it to her ; Mrs. Lovel gave her five hundred pounds in Bank of England notes in addition to a complete outfit ; and Bessie Andrews sent her a beautiful diamond cross with a charming letter in which she delicately referred to her brother's wrong-doings, and wished Jessie and her cousin all happiness and prosperity.

Julia, my child, lend me thy cambric pocket-handkerchief that I may hide my face whilst the parting takes place between Jessie and her aunt. I protest I cannot look. Who can stand the sight of women crying ? Let us all keep our eyes averted whilst we gasp out a "God bless you" to Jessie. Heaven guard you, dear child. Be a good girl. Think your husband the

best, the handsomest, the truest man in the world. And Grahame, be kind to her. Remember she is leaving all for you, ay, even Bijou, though Mrs. Lovel sobs out that she will always, always take care of it and love it for dear Jessie's sake.

Ring your bell, you boy, behind there. Mr. Prompter, come out of your hole ; sure, sir, you must be tired of sitting so long ; drop the curtain, Mr. Shirtsleeves ; and Mr. Manager, there is an Elderly Person in the pit who wants to ask you a question.

E. P. "Please, sir, was Jane discharged ?"

M. "No, ma'am, Mrs. Lovel was a humane woman, and regarding contrition as a kind of promissory note for virtues of worth, kept her until Jane could no longer hold out, and married."



E. P. "Drat her ! I should have called in a constable and had her box searched. I know them servints of old. I was one myself, and when—"

• But here the gas is turned off, and the E. P. in a fright clammers over the seats and rushes out.

THE END.



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